

5. P. L.
A K
PRESERVATIVE
Robert, Las AGAINST *celles Carr.*
ATHEISM

AND
INFIDELITY;

PROVING
The Fundamental Principles
OF
NATURAL RELIGION,
AND
The Necessity and Certainty
OF
REVEAL'D RELIGION.

With an INTRODUCTION,
Shewing the Causes, pernicious Effects, and
Cure of Infidelity.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which Believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should Shine unto them, 2 Cor. 4. 3, 4.

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PRESERVATIVE

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TO THE
Illustrious and Venerable
SOCIETY,
INCORPORATED
For Propagating the
G O S P E L
In Foreign Parts.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

HAVING in the Following
Treatise endeavour'd to
prove, as briefly and
plainly as I could, the
Truth of the *Christian Religion*, I
knew of no fitter Persons to whom

The Dedication.

I should address it, than your *Illustrious Society*; who are united together in that glorious Design to concert proper Measures for the Propagation of the Gospel. Your Zeal in carrying on this good Work is too great to be confin'd within the Bounds of your own Country: It extends itself even to the remotest Parts of the Earth, and you spare neither Pains nor Expences, to bring all Mankind to the Knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus. By this Means you have wiped off the Scandal which the Papists throw upon the Reform'd Churches: That our Charity is defective, in that it takes no Care of the Salvation of Infidels and Idolaters: Whereas they have labour'd to convert them, by exposing themselves to the longest Voyages, and greatest Hazards: For, thanks be to God who hath inspir'd you with this Important Design! you have

now

The Dedication.

now cut off from our Adversaries
all Occasion of this Reproach; since
your generous and Charitable La-
bours have been so successful, That
the *Old and New World* can shew
a great many Profelytes, who have
embrac'd Christianity, by the Mini-
stry of those *Labourers*, whom you
have sent forth into this great and dif-
ficult Harvest: Whereby the Prophe-
cy of *Isaiah* is fulfill'd again in
our Days, *The People which sat*
in Darkness saw a great Light,
and to them who sat in the Regi-
on and Shadow of Death, Light is
springing up. In fine, Your princi-
pal Care and Study is to advance
the Glory of God, and spread the
Gospel of Christ over the Face of
the whole Earth. And are not
these Actions worthy of the Pri-
mitive Disciples of Jesus Christ?
Do they not deserve the Applau-
ses, Blessings, and Prayers, of all
good

The Dedication.

good Men? And what may we
not expect from such vigorous and
pious Endeavours? If we Judge
by the Effects which have already
attended them, we may
promise ourselves much greater
Things than we have yet seen:
Especially under the Reign of a
Princess, who makes Equity and
Justice the Foundation of Her
Throne; upon whom God hath
poured forth abundantly the most
precious Treasures of His Grace;
and who seems to be made Choice
of by Heaven to triumph over
Tyranny by Her Arms, over Im-
piety by Her Faith, over our Di-
visions by Her Moderation, and
over Vice by Her Vertue. Be-
ing animated by the Influence of
this Illustrious QUEEN, assisted
by Her liberal Gifts, encourag'd
by Her Power, Her Orders and
Example, You can scarce find
any

The Dedication

any thing Impossible in Your Grand Design. All Christians are oblig'd to promote it with their utmost Endeavours: And therefore I made no scruple to cast my Mite into Your Treasury, by writing this small Tract; which I now offer to You with all due Veneration: And I do most humbly beseech you, *My Lords and Gentlemen*, to accept of my weak Endeavours, and honour them with Your Protection, if they be not altogether unworthy of the great Subject I have made Choice of. God grant that they may be Effectual; to restore Sight to some blind Souls, and to confirm weak Christians in the knowledge of the Truth. And I shall account myself very happy, if by this means I may be an Instrument, in the Hand of Almighty God, to Save some from Death, and to Confirm others in the Way
VLA. to

The Dedication.

to Eternal Life. Give me leave
to Conclude, with assuring You,
that I am exceeding glad of this
Occasion, to give You a publick
Testimony of that profound Ve-
neration, wherewith I am,

My Lords and Gentlemen,

Your most humble, and

Most Obedient Servant,

P. L. T.

AN

A N
INTRODUCTION
TO THE

Following Treatise ;

SHEWING

*The chief Causes of the Infidelity of
Libertines,*

The pernicious Effects of it,

A N D

*The most effectual Means of restraining
it, and putting a Stop to its further
Progress.*

MAny, no doubt, will wonder to
see a new Treatise publish'd,
upon a Subject which has been
already so well handled by so many learn-
ed Men; and will look upon all that can
be alledg'd by me for asserting those
Truths, which have been fully demonstra-
ted by others, as a vain Repetition of
what has been already said. But to
this

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this I answer in general, That if we may not speak and write about such Matters as have been already treated of, then we must be silent as to every thing almost that is the Object of human Knowledge, since there is nothing perhaps in the World, which has not been the Subject of an infinite Number of Discourses; so that we may say of the Productions of the Mind, what Solomon said of those of Nature, *Eccles. 1. 9. There is nothing new under the Sun*: And particularly, we must neither Preach nor Write about matters of Morality, for these, if any thing, have been handled and discuss'd a Thousand and a Thousand Times over. But what Man of Probity and Reason dares maintain an Opinion so absurd and pernicious?

I answer in the second Place, with Respect to the Christian Religion in particular, That altho' some Books which have been written to demonstrate the Truth of it, are excellently well done, and leave no Room for any one to doubt, who reads them with Attention and makes a right Use of his Reason; yet still some useful Essays may be made upon this great Subject: And if this be possible, I am perswaded, that some able Person ought to make an Attempt to this Purpose.

First then, I say, That some useful Essays may still be made upon this Subject, because it is so large a Field, that whatever Learning has been shewn in treating about it, yet still by close Meditation

tation upon it, some Degrees of Evidence, some solid Reasons are discovered, which have escaped the most discerning Writers. And this plainly appears by the Experience we had a few Years ago: For 'tis very well known, That certain Treatises appear'd towards the End of the last Century, which were written with much greater Strength of Reason in many Things, than those that had been publish'd before, and that they open'd the Eyes of some Persons, which had continued shut until that Time. But tho' it should be granted, that we cannot invent new Proofs, yet at least 'tis undeniable, that in many Respects we can give them a new Turn, and propose them in a different Manner; which may have a good Effect upon some, who were not at all moved by the Proofs as they were at first represented.

I say 2dly, That if it be possible to make useful Essays upon this Subject, we are oblig'd to make some Attempt to that Purpose; because as on the one Hand it is of vast Extent, so on the other it is of so great Importance, that it can never be too much inculcated into the Mind and Heart of any Man. If it be true, *That there is a God, a Providence, a Heaven for good Men, and a Hell for the Wicked; and that God has reveal'd to us the Manner in which he will be serv'd*: Can we think too often upon these great Truths? Can we speak or write too much of them? Is there any Thing comparable to the Care we ought

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to take, to convince our selves and others more and more of these important Truths?

I. *Motives for writing this Treatise.*

These two Reasons therefore did chiefly move me to undertake this Work, *viz.* The great Importance of Salvation, and the Possibility of adding some new Light and Force to the Proofs that have been produc'd for the Christian Religion. Every Time that I reflected upon the Libertinism of Atheists, the Idolatry of the Pagans, the Infidelity of the Jews and Mahometans, and upon the Negligence of the greatest Part of Christians as to the Duties of Piety, I was mightily troubled to see so many Persons unhappily engag'd in such dangerous Errors and evil Practices; and the great Uneasiness I endured upon that Account, inspir'd me with a Design to attempt something to reduce them from these fatal Errors, into the Way that leads to the chief Happiness of Mankind. And at last I was determin'd to set upon this Design, by considering that the best Treatises that have been publish'd upon this Subject, seem'd to me too long for the Libertines, who are naturally Lazy, and Enemies to such Arguments as oppose their Opinions and Conduct. For altho' they ought to spare neither Time nor Study to inform themselves about this Matter, yet I thought it necessary to accommodate my self to their Humour, and to remove all Obstacles which might hinder

hinder them from coming to the Knowledge of such necessary Truths. 'Tis true, what the learned *Grotius* wrote upon this Subject, does not make any great Volume: But then 'tis also certain, that he past over too slightly the Arguments for the Existence of a God, for a Providence and the Immortality of the Soul; and that he did not assert these first Principles, with all the Strength and Evidence they deserv'd.

Having thus shewn the Occasion of this Treatise, I shall now in a few Words give an Account of the Method of it. I have divided it into three Parts: And in the first, I have proved *the Existence of a God, a Providence, and the Immortality of the Soul*, against Atheists and the greatest Part of Deists. In the second, I shew *the Necessity of God's revealing his Will to Mankind*, against the Pagans, and the Deists who follow Natural Religion. And lastly, I shew in the third Part against all Infidels, *That this reveal'd Will is contain'd in that which we call the Holy Scripture, comprehended in the Old and New Testament*. Being resolved to be very concise, I shall only propose some of the strongest Proofs of Christianity, without troubling my self to answer all the Difficulties that can be objected against it. For as it is not necessary to know what is Darkness, in order to the understanding what is Light, which is sufficiently discern'd by its own

II. *A Plan of this Treatise.*

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Brightness : So when one plainly and distinctly knows a Truth, 'tis not necessary in order to his fuller Assurance of it, that he should be able to answer every Thing that can be objected against it; because Evidence being the infallible Mark of the Certainty of our Knowledge, 'tis impossible but that which we clearly perceive should be true. Thus, if I can demonstrate the Christian Religion by clear Reasons and direct Arguments, this will be sufficient to establish the Truth of it, and it will not be necessary to answer particularly all the Objections that can be made against it. Nevertheless to cut off all Pretence of Excuse from the Libertines, I shall, in one Article of this Preface, give some general Answers to the greatest Difficulties, which may satisfy all sensible and indifferent Persons who sincerely desire to know the Truth; and in the Treatise itself I shall examine some Arguments of the Infidels, when they appear to me to deserve it.

Since the Reading of this Treatise will cost these People but five or six Hours of their leisure Time, I hope this Brevity will engage them to take some Notice of the Proofs of the Christian Religion; which if they do, I do not much doubt, but they will be extremely shock'd by them: And tho' perhaps they will not at first fully convince them, yet at least they will excite them to make stricter Enquiries into the Matter, which may at last dissipate

dissipate all their Darkness, and perfectly overcome their Obstinacy.

This Obstinacy appears so surprizing to well-instructed Christians, who have not enquired into the Reason of it, and besides has such a pernicious Influence upon many weak and ignorant People, who sometimes hear their impious Discourses, that I think it will be very convenient to shew, that their Knowledge is by no means the Cause of their rejecting Christianity; but that this is done upon quite other Motives, which their Conversation and Conduct discover plainly enough to every one that takes Notice of them. Of these Motives I shall only mention Six, which are the principal, and may suffice to discover what is their true Temper, and how much their Opinions deserve to be despised.

III. *Six Causes of the Infidelity of Libertines.*

The first and most general Cause of their Infidelity, is doubtless their Ignorance of the Proofs upon which the Christian Religion is founded. Two Things perswade me that the Libertines have no Knowledge of these Proofs, or at least that they have no perfect Idea of them: One is, that they are so strong an Evidence, that 'tis impossible to consider them with Attention and Impartiality, but every Man must be fully convinc'd by them. For what Principles are more clear than the Existence of a God, a Providence,

1st. *Cause, is their Ignorance of the Proofs of the Christian Religion.*

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and the *Immortality of the Soul*? And who that can think or reason exactly, in the least Measure, can doubt of them, if they make such Reflections upon them as their Importance deserves? As to *Revelation*, whosoever will duly examine all the Testimonies which establish the Certainty of it, must plainly confess, that there were never any Matters of Fact better confirm'd, than those that are the Object of our Faith, as I hope to demonstrate in the following Discourse. Seeing therefore the Reasons of Christianity are uncontestable, there is just Cause to believe that no Man can be an Infidel, but he that is ignorant of those Reasons upon which it is founded, or does not rightly apprehend them, either thro' his Negligence to inform himself, or by reason of his Prejudices which are rendred almost unconquerable by his Passions; for by one of these two Ways he is hindred, from perceiving those Truths which he would be very sorry to find out.

The second thing that confirms me in this Opinion, That Infidels are for the most part ignorant in Matters of Religion, is the Experience I have frequently had of them: For in the Conversation I have had with this Sort of Men, I have observed, that some of them understand polite Learning well enough, the Mathematicks, Politicks, and the Affairs of the World; but I never met with any who had duly considered the Principles of Christianity, or could discourse pertinently about them. On the contrary it appear'd

pear'd by their intricate Way of talking, that they had only a confused *Idea* of them, and that they were much less conversant in the Proofs of that Religion, than in the Objections that are made against it. 'Tis very rare to meet with one of them who had once look'd into the Holy Scriptures, or if any of them had, it was not done with any Design to enquire seriously and impartially, whether they were of Divine Authority or no; but only to find out some plausible Difficulties, whereby to confirm themselves in Infidelity; and especially that they might have this to boast of in all Companies, that they are not Infidels without Reason. This reading therefore, is so far from being useful to them, that it serves only to make them more proud and more incapable of embracing the Truth, because then they foolishly imagine, that they know every thing that concerns Religion, and have good Reason to reject it. But could they once be perswaded to reflect but a little upon the slender Knowledge they have of it, and upon the Method they took to obtain it, they would quickly perceive how wretchedly they flatter themselves in pretending to understand it perfectly: For to make this good, they must, first free their Minds from all Prejudices, and then begin with learning the Principles of Religion, which they should seriously and deeply consider. Neither is this any more, than what is counted reasonable to be done, by every one that would learn exactly any Science.

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ence. But in stead of following this wise Method, and enquiring at first into the Grounds of Christianity with all possible Application of Mind, that they may be able to make a right Judgment of it, they take Notice only of some Difficulties in it, which they look upon as so many Demonstrations that perfectly overthrow it: And satisfying themselves with such an imperfect Knowledge, and those confused *Ideas* they have framed about it, they persuade themselves that they have done all that is necessary to enable them to determine themselves with Safety. This is in Truth the Method in which these People proceed, who being blinded by their own Illusions, continue all their Life-time ignorant of that which above all Things in the World it most concerns them to know.

2d. Cause,
*The Corruption
of their Man-
ners.*

The second and most powerful Cause of Infidelity, is *the Corruption of Manners*. It may be safely affirm'd, without Fear of Mistaking, that there never was a Man truly Vertuous, who believed that there was neither Reward nor Punishment to be expected after Death; and on the contrary, it may be truly said, That Licentiousness of Practice is the high Way that leads to Libertinism in Speculation, and that those who passionately and obstinately love a debauched Course of Life, scarce ever avoid falling into Infidelity. And indeed how can any Man that is

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sunk into an Abyss of sensual Pleasures, and is sensible, that he cannot disengage himself from them, nay who would be sorry if he should do it; I say, How can such a Man be reconciled to these threatening Declarations of Scripture, which expressly say, that those who abandon themselves to their Lusts and Passions, shall suffer after Death eternal Torments, unless they wholly forsake their evil customs, and lead a new Life? When once a Man is convinc'd, that he who committeth Sin shall be cast for ever into a Lake of Fire and Brimstone, unless he do heartily repent of his Sin, 'tis impossible for him to continue in a sinful Course, without enduring a Thousand Checks of Conscience, which will not only disturb his Pleasures, but render his Life an insupportable Burthen. What then is to be done, that he may still with a quiet Conscience satisfy his darling Lusts and Passions, which he has a mind to cherish, and that he may still relish without bitter Remorse their deadly Pleasures? For this end he must endeavour to perswade himself, that the Soul dies with the Body, and so that all which is said of Hell is nothing but a pure Fable; or at least, that if the Soul is immortal, the Author of our Nature will not punish so severely those Actions, which for the most Part proceed from a natural Inclination. These are the Thoughts which a corrupt Heart commonly suggests to the Mind of a Man, who naturally

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turally loves those Sentiments that flatter his Inclinations: For he being charm'd with the bewitching Pleasures of Sin, is willing to take the least Probabilities which seem to favour his Lusts, for convincing Reasons. So that by saying often to himself, that there is nothing to be fear'd, he hardens himself by Degrees in a sinful Course, and in such an Infidelity as becomes too often incurable.

3d. Cause, A third Cause of this unhappy Temper, is *Pride*: And indeed those who are entirely govern'd by this Passion,

can very hardly be reconcil'd to Religion, chiefly upon these three Accounts. The first is, That they are profess'd Enemies to the Opinions commonly receiv'd: For knowing that the common People are extremely credulous, and that they blindly follow the grossest Errors, they are ashamed to debase themselves by joining with them in the same Sentiments. And herein they resemble that famous Cynick *Diogenes*, who run counter with all his Might to the People of *Athens* when they were coming in Crowds out of the Theatre; for they pretend, as he did, to believe and act contrary to the common People in all Things. They say almost the same thing with those miserable Jews, who would not acknowledge Jesus Christ; *This People who knoweth not the Law*, (and cannot judge of any thing) *are cursed*. They imagine that they cannot better distinguish themselves from the Multitude

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in point of Honour, and acquire the Reputation of an extraordinary Judgment, than by despising Religion above all Things, and particularly what it teaches about Hell, as the Belief of the Mob, which is suited only to mean Souls, and would do a Prejudice to their great Courage. But the Libertines here suppose two Things which are very false; one is, That Men of Wit cannot believe the Doctrines of Religion; the other is, That all the common People are Fools, and altogether incapable of judging of any Matters tho' they are most easy to be understood. Whereas on the contrary it is certainly true, as appears by an infinite Number of Examples, that Persons of great Learning, of good Sense, and who judge of Things without Prejudice, neither are, nor ever can be, either Atheists, or Deists, when they examine carefully the Grounds of Christianity: And as to the Common People, altho' they generally know not how to use their Reason aright, yet there are many among them, (especially in those Places, where the Reformation has spread the Light of the Gospel, and given all People the Liberty of judging about Things sacred) who have Sense good enough to apprehend and relish the general Truths of Religion, the Knowledge whereof requires rather Freedom of Mind and Uprightness of Heart, than any great Depth of Judgment. The Trades-men, the Country-men, and all Persons of mean

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mean Birth, come into the World with the same Dispositions of Body and Soul that other Men have; and 'tis apparent, that some of them want nothing but a good Education to make them great Wits. *How often does Nature produce in vain Cicero's and Virgils in the World!* As Mr. Fontenelle pleasantly remarks. We must not therefore imagine, that among the Common People, there is never any one born with a good Wit. But supposing this were as true as it is false, Is it not extreme Folly, to reject any Doctrine for this ridiculous Prejudice, because it is profess'd by the Common People, as if all that the Common People believes were certainly false? Whereas it ought to be considered, that in Matters of Religion, the Common People do nothing but follow their Learned Guides, who have made Religion their principal Study: Among whom there are many, who have demonstrated, and do still demonstrate it every Day, both by Word of Mouth and by Writing, with all the Evidence that can be reasonably desir'd.

The Second Reason which renders the *Proud* averse to the Christian Religion, is the mean Condition of those who were the First Preachers of the Gospel, and the Precepts of Humility which they have so expressly given us, whereby we are oblig'd to deny our Selves: For the mere Apprehension of submitting their Mind and Will to the Doctrines and Rules of a Teacher of a mean Condition, who was Cru-

Crucified as a Malefactor, who had no Disciples but such as were Poor and Unlearn'd, who had neither genteel Breeding nor Reputation, provokes their Vanity to rage and fret. What, say they, shall such Persons as are infinitely above the Common People, become the Followers of some wretched *Galileans*, who were despis'd by the great Men of the World, driven from Place to Place, and at last condemn'd to most shameful Deaths as Malefactors! This is what they cannot do. These swollen *Sons of Pride* cannot endure such Masters, and much less the Doctrine they Teach. To demand of a proud Man, who has been wont to admire himself, and despise all the rest of the World, that he should humble himself, that he should deny himself, that he should abase himself to a level with the meanest, that he should hate himself, that he should pardon his Enemies, love them and do them good; in a Word, that he should sacrifice his Vanity to the Cross of Christ; This is to demand of him the only Thing in all the World, which is most inconsistent with his humor, and which is morally impossible for him to do.

The Third Reason which induces a *proud Man* to be an Infidel, is the Praises and Favours, which some witty Men, when they are profess'd Libertines, receive commonly from their Admirers. When any one has learn'd the Art of ridiculing Religion with an agreeable Air, and

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and turning the Words of Scripture into matter of Raillery, this is accounted such a singular Piece of Merit, as is mightily applauded by his Followers, who for the most part are young Debauchees, and Persons of Quality, whose lewd Life agrees much better with the Principles of Infidelity than with the rigid Rules of the Gospel; every one strives who shall commend him most, and extols him to the Skies as a Wit of the first Rank: He is the Delight of prophane Company at their riotous Feasts; he is loaded with Honours, Complements, and Favours, and nothing is omitted that may Flatter his Vanity: And what can be more proper to tickle the vain and selfish humor of a *proud Man*, who has the unhappy Talent of diverting Impious Men at the expence of Religion, and procuring to himself by that means so great Advantages?

But they are not only Persons of Wit, whom *Pride* prevails with to turn Libertines, for the Reason I last mention'd; for besides them there is a great number of young Fools and ignorant Sparks, who glory in being Apes to these witty Men, and repeating after them with an Air of greater Assurance, and more sarcastick Raillery, *Fabula Manes, i. e.* All that has been told us concerning the State of Souls after Death, is nothing but mere Stories and Fictions: And these

* Ut putentur sapere, Cœlum vituperant.

wanting all the Qualifications which might procure them Esteem, * fancy that their

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Infidelity is to them in stead of true Merit, and that it makes all the World look upon them as great Wits, and the only Philosophers; and upon this Account, they rashly abandon themselves, without ever making any Enquiry, to the most pernicious Error in the World.

A fourth Cause of Infidelity, is the great Number of Sects, which have always divided the Christians, ever since the Age of the Apostles. *If the Proofs of the Christian Religion, say the Libertines, were so evident and uncontestable, as you would persuade us, how came the Christians in all Ages to be divided into so many contrary Opinions? And if what you call the Holy Scriptures, were of Divine Revelation, is it credible, that God would not have declared his Will in Terms so clearly express, that all the World should have known his meaning without any Possibility of Mistake?*

4th. Cause, the different Sects among Christians.

As to the first Part of this Objection, I answer, That the Divisions of Christians do no ways evince that the Reasons which prove the Truth of their Religion, are not evident, since they all agree in the chief Articles of their Faith; Such as, the Existence of a God, the Creation of the World, a Providence, the Revelation of the Law of Moses; The sending of Jesus Christ into the World, the Resurrection of the Dead, the General Judgment, the Reward of the Faithful, and the Punishment of the Wicked in a Life after this.

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As to the Perspicuity of the Holy Scripture, with Respect to the other Articles of Faith, 'tis evident, that all things necessary to be believed in Order to Salvation are therein plainly reveal'd, and that if all Persons would read it with a Spirit of Humility and Charity, having no other Design but only to be inform'd of their Duty, they would quickly be reunited in one and the same Communion: But the Mischief of it is, that the greatest Part of Men are much less govern'd by their Reason, than by their Passions and Prejudices, which do so far blind them, that they cannot or will not see, that which would be as clear as the Sun, if they would judge without Prejudice. And hence it comes to pass, that in stead of making the Word of God the Rule of their Faith, they endeavour by all Means to force the Word of God to comply with their peculiar Sentiments. Thus *Systems* of Theology are built upon false Grounds, *Articles* of Faith are multipli'd almost without End, and the Authors of them endeavour with all their Might to explain that which can never be explain'd; they dispute with Heat and Passion about Trifles, and then endeavour against all Sense and Reason to authorize their Follies by Revelation, and at last proceed to anathematize without Charity, all that refuse to profess the same Faith in Humane Determinations, which is due only to those that proceed from the Tribunal of God himself. This is the true

true Cause of our fatal Divisions, which can be no more reasonably attributed to the Holy Scripture, than the Cause why a blind Man does not see can be attributed to the Sun. In the mean time, I do not deny but this sacred Book contains Mysteries incomprehensible by our Reason; yet still I say that nothing is clearly reveal'd about them which implies a contradiction, and that if the Matter be well consider'd, no such thing can be found save only in the manner of explaining them by some Divines.

Tho' what I have now said be never so true and well-grounded, yet it will not satisfy the Libertines, who always require for Articles of Faith no less than *Mathematical* demonstrations. But there is nothing more unreasonable than what they insist upon, since the Nature of Religious matters will not admit of such kind of Proofs: But what then? Dare they maintain that there is nothing evident and certain, but what is Geometrically demonstrated? And would not they be some of the First to laugh at any one, who should doubt if ever there was such a Man as *Julius Caesar*, upon this pretence, That this Matter of Fact cannot be prov'd after the same manner as a Proposition of *Euclid* is prov'd? If this be so, then it must be granted, that there are some Truths no less certain than those of the Mathematicks, altho' the Evidence be quite of another kind. Now to convince themselves that the fundamental Articles of

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Christianity are of this Number, they need do no more but examine them with the same disposition of Mind which they bring to the Mathematicks, *i. e.* with close Attention, without any Prejudice, and having no other design but the discovery of the Truth. But this is what scarce any of the Infidels are capable of, who will never root out of their Heart those vicious Passions, which like a thick and impenetrable Cloud, intercept the light of the Truth, and hinder it from shining effectually into their Mind: And in this fatal temper they persist with great obstinacy to require, if I may so say, a *Geometrical* Religion, which whether they will or no, shall force the will of all Mankind to submit to it. But in good earnest, Do they believe that it had been Wisdom in God to bestow a Mathematical Evidence upon his Revelation? Is it not plain, that if he had given it this kind of Evidence, that Liberty which he has given us for choosing good or evil, would have been of no use in those matters which were to be the principal Object of it? Surely Salvation does very well deserve our pains, in making some enquiries after the means of obtaining it; and methinks it would be no wise just, that those who will not practise what is necessary in order to obtaining that Happiness which Religion promises, should enjoy the same Priviledg with those who make Piety their Study, and the Practice of Good Works the chief business of their Life.

A fifth Cause of Infidelity ^{5th Cause,}
is the Corruption of the Manners ^{The wicked}
of Christians. Since Examples ^{Lives of Chri-}
do commonly make a stronger Impression than Reasons,
upon the Mind of those who are not wont to think closely about any Thing, from hence it comes to pass, that the Vices which do but too generally prevail among us, do much more alienate the Libertines from Religion, than the solid Proofs which are brought do persuade them; for they being Witnesses of our behaviour, do not fail to observe with an evil Eye our Excesses; they laugh at them and take occasion from thence to Scoff at our sacred Truths. But as to our Reasons, since they do not think of them, or at least do not consider them with a close Attention, they are not affected by them after the same Manner, and consequently they cannot inspire them with reverence for that Religion which they see us every day dishonour by our wicked Actions. *If Christians, say they, were fully convinc'd that there is a Heaven and a Hell, is it possible that they should live as they do? Would these Reverend Doctors of Theology, and these great Professors of Piety so much envy one another? Would they be so revengeful, so implacable, so selfish, so ambitious, so proud, if they were really persuaded that these Sins would one day throw them into the Pit of eternal Torments? No surely, this is no wise credible; and so the Life of these Men gives us just Cause to think, that they use*

22 INTRODUCTION, *shewing*

Religion only as a Stalking-Horse to attain their Ends, which makes them more guilty than we, who govern our Selves according to our avow'd Principles. But let us examine a little this Prejudice, and see if it be any just Reason for rejecting the Christian Religion.

First then I say, that altho it be too true, that many of these who call themselves Christians, lead debauch'd and wicked Lives, yet Thanks be to God there are many Faithful, who zealously work out their own Salvation, and so sincerely answer the End of their Vocation. If the Infidels know none such, I don't at all wonder; for such pious Persons live retired from the World, as much as is possible, they carefully conceal their good Works from publick Notice: They are so far from sounding a Trumpet in the Streets, to proclaim their Alms, from praying in the High-ways, from disfiguring their Face, and making it look pale to make a show of their Fasting and Penance; That they will not suffer their left Hand to know the good Deeds of their right Hand: They shut themselves up in their Closet to pray unto their Heavenly Father in secret, and carefully shun the least Appearance of Mortification, and every Thing that favours of Ostentation and Vain-Glory: And because Agreement of Manners is the usual Bond of Friendship, they contract no intimate Acquaintance with any but their Brethren, who acknowledge,
serve

serve and love the same God, and who pursue the same End with the same earnest Desires. Their Faith, their Rules of Life, their Inclinations being directly contrary to those of the *Libertines*, they shun all frequent Conversation with them, and choose rather to see no Body, than to have Fellowship with the declared Enemies of their God, whose Honour and Glory they prefer to all the Creatures. The *Infidels* therefore have no Reason to conclude that there are no *sincere Christians*, because they know none such, and none of them frequent their Company.

In the second Place I say, That *the bad lives* of a great Number of Christians are no good Argument, that they are not persuaded of the Truth of their Religion. My Reason is this, because the Precepts of Christianity being perfectly contrary to our natural Corruption, the Violence of our Passions does many times engage the Will on their Side, before the Understanding has consider'd its Principles, according to that well-known Verse, *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*. From this Contrariety of Practice and Judgment proceed those Repentances and Relapses, those good Resolutions and the Violations of them, which happen so frequently, during the whole Life of so many Christians. I add, that the Reason why the Lives of many of them, are not agreeable to the Truths they believe, is, because they Trust too much to the Mercy of God, without sufficient Regard

24 INTRODUCTION, *shewing*

to his Justice, and flatter themselves that they shall live long enough, to repent of their Sins, and make their Peace with God; and by this deadly Delusion they forget their Principles, and so their Faith becomes unfruitful and unprofitable. As to the Uniform Behaviour of the *Liber-tines*, The Case is very different, for their Opinions do perfectly agree with their Lusts and Passions, and therefore 'tis no Wonder that they follow their Principles; but on the contrary, it would be very strange if they should act otherwise, for it is almost impossible but the Depravation of the Mind and the Manners should always keep Pace with one another. But I am very certain, that in other Respects they do not always act so consistently, and that many times they do those Things which their Judgment does not approve of, and this is sufficient to convince them that a Man is never at a constant Agreement with himself, and that his Actions do often give the Lye to his Judgment.

In the last Place I answer, That we do not deny but there are some who make a great external Show of Devotion, and yet do not heartily believe the Truths they make Profession of. But what follows from hence, but that there are some Hypocrites among us, who have a Mind to purchase the Esteem and Affections of good Men by their fair Outside, and to compass their Designs by Ways quite different from those of the *Infidels*, who endeavour

deavour to make themselves considerable, and advance their Fame by their Impiety? All the Advantage which they can gain from this Instance of *false Christians* is this, that they have such wicked Wretches for Companions in their Infidelity, whose Hypocrisy and Errors does no ways weaken the Force of the Arguments for the Christian Religion.

Lastly, a sixth Cause of Infidelity, is *the difficulties which some pretend to find in the Christian Doctrine*, and if we will believe the *Libertines*,

6th Cause,
The difficulties
in the Christi-
an Doctrine.

this is the great Obstacle which hinders them from believing it. Since they are not willing to confess, that Ignorance, Debauchery and Pride, are the Motives which most powerfully influence their Minds, they commonly fly for refuge to this pretence which they extremely value; and therefore they would fain persuade all the World, that they reject the Christian Religion for no other Reason, but because it contains such Doctrines, which according to them are contrary to Right Reason, and which Men of Sense cannot relish.

If this Objection were well-grounded, *i. e.* If it were certain, That the Christian Religion were such as the *Libertines* represent it, full of Mysteries which are really and evidently contrary to Reason, there would be no just Cause to wonder at their *Infidelity*: But there is nothing more false, than what they affirm,

as

26 INTRODUCTION, *shewing*

as any one may be easily satisfy'd, if he will but consult the Word of God carefully and without Prejudice. 'Tis true indeed, that if one should take the *Romish Religion*, for instance, to be *true Christianity*, there would be just Cause to believe, that God could not be the Author of all those absurd Doctrines, which the Papists make Articles of Faith: Doctrines so fatal, that they induce many witty Men among them to turn Deists, because thro' their Ignorance of the Scriptures, they cannot distinguish between the Absurdities of their Church, and the Truths of the Gospel. But the Doctrine of *Jesus Christ* and that of the *Popes of Rome* is very different; and tho' the former contains such Things as are above our Natural Reason, yet it proposes nothing which is contrary to it, or which implies a manifest Contradiction, as the other does. However therefore the Difficulties which are alledg'd against Christianity be great and inexplicable, yet they cannot justify the *Infidelity of Libertines*.

If they would prove solidly, that this Religion is not true, they must first attack the Principles of it, and demonstrate clearly that they are false: For as long as they remain Evident, all the Objections that can be raised from other Topicks will be of no Force, because Evidence being the infallible Mark of Truth, as I have already observ'd, 'tis impossible that Christianity should be false, as long as its Principles have this Mark.

Second.

Secondly, To the End that *Difficulties* proposed against Religion may afford some reasonable Cause of doubting, they must be perfectly comprehended, and we must have a clear and distinct Knowledge of all the Attributes of God, of the true Properties of his Power, Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, and of every Thing, which is most agreeable to the Excellency of his Perfections: In a Word, there must be some Proportion between God and Man, *i. e.* Between a Being of the highest Perfections and Nothing. Now since it is undeniable, that there is no such Proportion, it must needs be acknowledg'd, that God being infinite can do some Things, which infinitely surpass the Capacity of a Human Understanding. To this Purpose *Lucian* brings in *Socrates* making a Discourse of so much Strength and Beauty, that I cannot forbear to set it down here. 'Tis very difficult to judge of the Possibility and Impossibility of Things, and to measure the Extent of the Divine Power by our Weakness, since the most ancient Man is but an Infant in Respect of God. Do ye not know that God is much higher above us than the Heaven is above the Earth? How far does a Man exceed an Infant both in Strength and Skill, when we see that one Man is too hard for Millions of Babes? If we therefore do so far excel others like ourselves, how great must the Excellency be of the Creator above the Creature? *Lucian* in the Dialogue of *Cherephon* and *Socrates*. What I have said of the infinite Power of God, is

28 INTRODUCTION, *shewing*

is a Truth so manifest and sensible, that it ought to satisfy all Persons that are any wise reasonable, and serve for an Answer to the most unaccountable *Difficulties*. If therefore, for instance, it be objected to me, That it is unconceivable, that the World should be made of nothing; That Spirits created, and consequently dependent, should be capable of acting freely; and lastly, That God who is infinitely Wise, infinitely Holy, infinitely Good, and whose Prescience has no bounds, should make a Creature peccable, when he foresaw that it would fall into sin, which is the only Cause of all the Disorders in the World: I answer in general, as to the Two first of these Three Objections, which perhaps are the strongest that can be propos'd, That the Power of the Creator being infinite, can do such Things as are incomprehensible by us; that it can produce the Universe out of nothing, and make some Creatures Free Agents, since there appears to us no contradiction in these wonderful Acts of Almighty Power. As to the entrance of Sin, which God permitted to come into the World, I say, That since his Wisdom, Holiness and Goodness, and his other Attributes, do infinitely transcend our Conception, and we do not know what is most agreeable to them, we ought not at all to wonder, that he did not hinder the Fall of Man, tho' we cannot comprehend the Reasons why he did so. Tho' we had nothing else to say but this as to these *Difficulties*,
and

and all others that can be imagin'd, with respect to the Actions and Properties of God, there is no reasonable Man, but ought to acquiesce in it without reluctance.

But to shew yet more fully that *Infidels* are inexcusable for refusing to believe Christianity, upon the account of the unanswerable *Difficulties* it contains, I will now prove to them in a few Words, that our Mind is so far from comprehending every thing that relates to God, that it cannot comprehend even the smallest thing in Nature. And to this purpose I shall not here take notice of Eternity, that inconceivable Property which the Atheists are oblig'd to attribute to Matter, as we acknowledge it in God; Neither shall I say any Thing of the Immense extent of the Universe, thro' which our Imagination wanders till it loses itself: These things are too sublime, I will only ask them, If they can give a clear account of the smallest Things that are the object of Sense. Does not every one of them in Nature nonpluss them? A living Atom many Millions of times

less than a Grain of Sand, as the * Curious have observ'd : Does it not confound their Understanding, when they consider that this kind of *Animalculum*, which is next to nothing, includes in its Body, which is so prodigiously small, an infinite number of Organs necessary to its Life? I will add something

* See what Mr. Lewenhoeck has said in his Letters about Insects.

30 INTRODUCTION, *shewing*
thing which is yet more unanswerable, and
ought to stop their Mouth for ever. Let
them tell me plainly, whether Matter is
divisible *in infinitum* or not. This Questi-
on is not concerning a Thing that is very
sublime and abstracted, of which they have
no knowledge, for certainly they know
what is Matter, what it is to be divisi-
ble, and to be divisible *in Infinitum*: In
fine, 'tis plain that one of these Two
Propositions must be true; and yet let
them choose which of them they will to
maintain, and I will undertake to propose
such Objections against it, as all their
Wit and Subtlety cannot Answer. If
then there be such Truths about Things
Sensible, that lie Level to our Capa-
city, which are entangled with inextri-
cable Difficulties, ought we to Wonder,
that we who are Finite, cannot conceive
how far the Attributes of God extend,
and that we cannot clearly understand all
the Motives of his Actions.

Before I conclude this Article, I will
insist a little upon one Thing of great
Importance for convincing the *Infidels*:
And that is, If they will reject the Chri-
stian Doctrine, upon the account of the
Incomprehensible *Difficulties* to which it
is liable, then Reason and Prudence re-
quire, that they should propose another
System of Doctrine, that is founded upon
Principles more evident than ours, and
that is not liable to such strong Objections:
But this is so far from being true,
that I desire them to propose any other
which

is not palpably absurd and false. The *Atheists* must choose One of these Two Ways: Either they must affirm that the World is eternal, or that it fram'd itself out of eternal Matter; and which so ever of these Two *Hypotheses* they embrace, they entangle themselves in a Labyrinth of Absurdities and Contradictions: For both of them will oblige the *Atheist* to maintain, First, That Matter did necessarily exist by itself from all Eternity, and consequently that it is most perfect, tho' the Idea we have of it does not include any necessity of Existence, and we do certainly know, that it is divisible, corruptible, purely passive, and consequently very imperfect: Secondly, That it moves itself, tho' Reason and Experience convinces us of the contrary: And in the Third Place, That it is capable of conceiving, judging, willing, loving, hating, and in a Word, of all kinds of Thoughts, tho' our clearest Notions do plainly discover the gross absurdity of such an Assertion.

I add more particularly as to the First of these Two *Hypotheses*, That if the Universe was eternal, it would be unconceivable, That the contrary should always be believ'd until *Aristotle's* time, who is thought to be the First that advanc'd this Opinion, in opposition, no Doubt, to the Judgment of the Atomical Philosophers. And so he himself tells us in his Treatise *de Cælo*, lib. 1. cap. 10. *That all the Philosophers affirm'd that the World was made.* And it would be no less un-

§2 INTRODUCTION, *shewing*

* Si nulla fuit genitalis Origo,

Terræ & Cœli, semperq; æterna fuere,

Cur supra Bellum Thebanum & funera Trojæ,

Non alias alii quoq; res cecinere Poetæ?

Quo tot facta virum toties cecidere; Nec usquam

Æternis famæ monumentis insita florent?

Lucret. l. 5.

unaccountable, That

* no certain History should remain of facts much more ancient, than those whose Memory is still preserv'd, and that our Predecessors, during an infinite Space of Time, should not sooner have invented the Sciences, and chiefly the most necessary

Arts; whose late Invention we do as certainly know, as we do the Beginning of Cities, States and People of different Nations. But beside these evident Proofs, we have others that are uncontestable, taken from the very Nature of the Things of this World. Who for Instance, that contemplates this vast wonderful Machine of the Universe, does not perceive in all its Parts by sensible Signs, that it is the Effect of some Cause? And if it be an Effect, must it not have a Beginning, and consequently it cannot be Eternal? I add, that Eternity being a Duration infinite and boundless to which nothing can be added, 'tis impossible, that Time, which is a Duration finite and bounded, should be Eternal, any more than all Things temporal, whereof it is the Duration, these two sorts of Duration being plainly contrary the one to the other. Now to convince any one, that Time is a finite Duration, let him add as many Years as he will, let

INTRODUCTION, shewing 33

let him put together a thousand Millions of Ages, and he will see that how great soever the Number be, he may still add more to it, and it will never become infinite. In fine, Things that are eternal must necessarily subsist all at once, without any Succession to one another; but it is plainly impossible, that Day and Night, for Instance, Spring-time, Summer, Autumn and Winter, the Flux and Reflux of the Sea, and all such Things which mutually succeed one another, should exist together at the same Time, and consequently, that they should be eternal. By these Reasons, and many others that may be alledg'd, it evidently appears, That the Eternity of the Universe is altogether indefensible, for whatsoever way a Man takes to defend it, he must involve himself in an infinite Number of Contradictions from which he can never be extricated.

As to the Opinion of those who pretend, that the World was made by itself without the Help of a Supreme Intelligent Being, nothing can be imagin'd more chimerical; for such Persons must be forc'd to acknowledge, as I have already observed, that Matter is eternal, that it moves of itself, and that it has the Properties of Thinking Substance, which are Suppositions, the most contrary to Reason that can be devis'd. But besides, can any Man of good Sense once * open his Eyes, and not perceive that the whole Uni-

* Artificis
Naturæ in-
gens opus as-
picit, nulla

D

verse

34 INTRODUCTION, shewing

Tu tanta
humanis re-
bus Spectacu-
la cernes.

Corn. Sever.

Ætna.

verse bears the visible signatures of its Formation by the infinite Wisdom and Power of an intelligent Being, absolutely Perfect? If we plainly perceive that Matter has not in itself any Principle of Motion, we must as certainly know, that it has nothing in itself, which can determine it to move one way rather than another. And therefore tho' it were true, that the Atoms, of which *Epicurus*, after *Leucippus* and *Democritus*, pretended this World to be made, did move themselves, yet being devoid of all Understanding, 'tis inconceivable that they could so fitly and regularly dispose themselves in so many different Places. It appears to me no less difficult to frame by a fortuitous Concourse of Atoms, the wonderful Structure of this Universe, all whose Parts appear plainly to be design'd for certain Ends, than it would be to make an excellent Poem, by throwing an infinite Number of Letters, at hap-hazard upon the Ground. Whosoever therefore is so foolish as to believe the one, may also be easily perswaded to believe the other. I will add but one Word more, which is this, That if all Animals were form'd by chance, out of the fat Slime of the Earth, being warm'd by the Heat of the Sun, as *Epicurus* affirm'd, 'tis altogether unaccountable that no Person should have seen the Earth bring forth either Men, Lyons, Horses, Dogs, Birds, or any other such-like Animals; And that the

the Atoms did not produce more of these admirable Machines, since the first Time. If they be nothing else but the Effect of a blind fortuitous Motion, why are not more such-like still form'd? Or why don't we see some new Kind of Animals grow out of the Earth? But these are Follies which deserve not any longer to be insisted on.

* An Impious Wretch in our Days, who was very Ambitious to become the Head of a new Sect of Atheists, has thought fit to express himself in a Way something different from those I last mention'd, and imagin'd that by this Means, he could cast a Mist before the Eyes of the Ignorant, and obtain the Reputation of an extraordinary Wit: But attempting to speak after a different Manner, he has, unhappily for himself, fallen into much grosser Absurdities, and more thwacking Contradictions than others had done. For who can be so stupid, as to believe his bold and Proofless Assertion, *viz. That there is in the Universe, only one Numerical Substance, endow'd with Extension and Thought, whose various Modifications are the necessary Effects of its own Nature.* This strange Hotch-potch is so extravagant, and so contrary to the clearest Principles of Reason, that a Man must either be incapable of thinking at all, or be very willing to be deceived, that can feed himself with such a Chimerical Fancy. But some learn'd Men ha-

* Spinoza
who died in
Holland, in
the Year 1677.

36 INTRODUCTION, *shewing*
ving sufficiently shewn how ridiculous it
is I shall not spend Time in repeating
what they have said.

Hence you may see plainly, how far
the greatest efforts of the *Libertine Do-*
ctors have carried them; and cannot these
People who have faith enough to believe
such absurdities, Scoff with a good Grace
at our Credulity. They cannot as they
pretend, believe Christianity because of
the *Difficulties* that attend it, and yet
they can very humbly yield their assent
to an Abyss of palpable *Contradictions*, and
ridiculous Follies. If they were in the
least capable of free-thinking, they would
quickly perceive the Difference between
their System and ours to consist in this,
That theirs has no other Foundation
but bare Suppositions which are so far
from being clearly demonstrated, that they
abound in palpable *Contradictions*, that
overthrow them all at once; whereas the
Christian Religion has such Principles, as
are plainly agreeable to Natural Reason,
and the Objections that are made against
it, relate only to such Subjects, as
Right Reason acknowledges should be a-
bove our Capacity.

Atheism being an Error so monstrous,
and indefensible, 'tis very difficult, nay per-
haps impossible, to find any Men of the
least Reason, who abandon themselves
wholly to it without some Reluctance.
And therefore, almost all *Infidels* choose
rather to betake themselves to *Deism*,
hoping by that means to have much fewer
Blows

Blows to ward off. These impious Men are of two Sorts : One of them pretends, That God having fram'd the World, and given Motion to Matter, does not concern himself any more in its Guidance, nor in the Actions of Men, whose Soul they believe to be material and mortal. Others acknowledge indeed *a Providence*, and *the Immortality of the Soul*, but reject all *Divine Revelation*, and maintain that God has given to Men no other Law but that of Nature which is engraven upon their Heart, and which is to be the only Rule of their Actions, according to which they shall be rewarded or punish'd after their Death.

But do these People, who cannot agree to *Christianity* because of its *Difficulties*, imagine that their own Opinions are exempt from any ? Do the former understand perfectly, how dependent Beings, such as Creatures are, can always Subsist without the continual Assistance of their Creator, and how they who have not in themselves any Principle of Motion, can continue to move, after God, the only Cause of their Motion, has suspended, or withdrawn the Influence of his Will ? Do they clearly conceive, that Matter can produce all the Thoughts and Operations of their Soul ? I shall not here relate the other Absurdities which are consequent upon their foolish Opinion ; any one may make a Judgment of it, by the Reasons which I shall hereafter produce, for a *Providence* and for the *Immortality of the*

38 INTRODUCTION, *shewing*
Soul. As to the *Deists* of the second Sort,
I shall not here trouble my self to refute
them; for it will sufficiently appear by
proving the *Necessity of a Reveal'd Religion*,
and the *Divine Authority of that Religion*,
that their Error is no more defensible
than that of the other Sort.

The *Atheists* and *Deists* being unable to
disentangle themselves from the *Difficul-*
ties into which they are brought by their
Opinions, there has arisen a third Sort
of impious Men, *who doubt of every*
Thing, pretending by this Means to be
more wise than the others, because they
free themselves all at once from any fur-
ther Trouble. These are declared Ene-
mies to all positive Determinations, and
take Pleasure in opposing all Opinions,
without fixing upon any. This fatal Pre-
judice of theirs, that 'tis impossible to
discover the Truth, makes them neglect
all Opportunities of searching after it,
and makes them so very lazy, that they
will not take the least Pains to inform
themselves of any Thing that is never so
little difficult. If we were treating only
of human Sciences, I could freely pardon
them their *Phyrrhonism*, for with Respect to
them, it would do no great hurt. But
I think there is nothing more unreasona-
ble than their Way of Proceeding, with
Respect to Religion. They doubt as they
say, whether *Christianity* is true or no, and
upon this slight Ground they neglect to
inform themselves of a Thing so impor-
tant, and yet they live altogether as if
they

they were fully perswaded that it was false. In good earnest does it become those, who think themselves so judicious, to make choice of this Spectical Way? If the Reasons be equal on both Sides, ought they not in Prudence to determine themselves to that Side which is safest? Why then do they abandon themselves to their Passions and Lusts, when they are no wise certain, that impenitent Sinners shall not suffer after Death, the Punishment wherewith they are threatned in the Holy Scriptures? I add moreover, That tho' there were a hundred, nay a thousand to one odds on that Side, that *Christianity* is not true; yet the least Probability to the contrary should be sufficient to oblige them to observe its Precepts. For supposing that there are neither Rewards nor Punishments after this Life, what hazard do they run? At most they can only be depriv'd of some momentary Pleasures, whose enjoyment is for the most Part attended with a Thousand Disgraces and Vexations, which embitter all their sweetness. But supposing on the contrary that these impious Men are mistaken, besides the Miseries which do almost unavoidably attend their extravagant Courses in this Life, they shall be for all Eternity after Death the Objects of the Vengeance of an Almighty God, who has declar'd in his Word, That he is a consuming Fire which shall devour his Adversaries; That it is a fearful thing to fall into his Hands, That he will cast into a Lake, burning with Fire and Brimstone,

40 INTRODUCTION, *shewing*

stone, all hardened Sinners that shall abuse his Goodness. Seeing therefore this Danger is so very dreadful, can any wise Man make a doubt which side he should choose, who does in the least value his true Interest?

Thus in a few Words I have shewn what are the Principal Causes of the Infidelity of *Libertines*; and my Design obliging me to Brevity, hinders me from enlarging further upon this Subject, and relating some other Causes of it. But I think I have said enough, to put them upon serious consideration of this Matter, and to remove the veil of their Prejudices, if they will but carefully and sincerely examine themselves. I conjure them not to flatter themselves in an Affair of so great importance, but to think of it again and again with all the fit dispositions of Mind which it requires: For if the Christian Religion is true, as an infinite number of Ingenious and Judicious Persons affirm, who have made it their chief Study, then the Impious ought to grant, that there is nothing in the World that more deserves their serious Reflexions. And therefore in Prudence they ought to take all imaginable care to inform themselves about it, and with great application to consult the Books and Persons that can instruct them, and not to Determine themselves so lightly as they do upon this occasion. If they will follow this Advice, as Right Reason and their own Interest require them to do, I doubt not

the pernicious Effects of Infidelity. 41

not but they will quickly be undeceiv'd, and the terrors of the Danger, to which they will see themselves expos'd, will induce them to prefer their own Salvation before the deceitful pleasures of Sin.

Having thus discover'd the Causes of Infidelity, I shall now endeavour to represent, how pernicious the effects of it will be, both to the *Libertines* themselves, and to *Civil Society*.

As to the *Libertines*, I say, That their grand Maxim being that which is mention'd by St. Paul, 1 Cor. 13. 32. *Let us Eat and Drink for to Morrow we Die*, * in pursuance of this goodly Principle, they must needs abandon themselves wholly to their Passions and, Lusts, and having no hope of another Life after this, they must endeavour to procure all possible Advantages to themselves in this; which is indeed what they never fail to do. But what are the usual consequences of their Debauches? Nothing less than the Squandering away of their Estate, the Contempt they meet with from good Men, the Diseases which make them old before their time, and many times carry them off || in the Flower of their Age; these wasting anxieties, which keep

IV. Two pernicious effects of Infidelity.

1st. Effect, fatal to the Libertines.

* Lude, bibas, comedas, post mortem nulla voluptas.

Vita nimis fera est crastina, vive hodie. *Martial*.

|| In vultus, nunquam virtus, sed saepe libido.

them

42 INTRODUCTION, shewing

Impellit,
turpiq; emi-
turvel morte
Voluptas.
Manil.

them always employ'd in endeavouring to satisfy themselves, and so hinder them from tasting that sweet Tranquility of Mind which is the greatest Pleasure of this Life. And yet all this is not what is most troublesome to them: For if they believe the Annihilation of their Soul, how can they think of that frightful State without Horrour? And can they altogether forbear to think of it, in the Intervals of their Debauches? But if they think their Principles uncertain, as 'tis impossible but the Infidels, if they have any Sense, must do, how are they tormented with anxious and frightful Thoughts, in spite of all their boasted Firmness of Soul? In vain do they pretend to intrepidity, In vain do they protest that they have no Fear of Death, nor of the Judgments of God: We know that they are Pusillanimous Bragadochio's, whose Rodomontado's have no other Foundation than their own Foolish Vanity. There are an infinite Number of Examples, more credible than all their Oaths, wherewith they would persuade us to the contrary, which plainly prove that a Fever, the Appearance of a Shipwreck, the least Danger of Death, which gives them Occasion and Time to reflect upon their past Life, makes their Heart to tremble in their Breast. I confess they may for some Time drown themselves in Pleasures, harden themselves in their wicked Courses, and continue insensible

sible of future Dangers: But this Indolence cannot always last; after this Calm, there commonly follows a Storm; their Drunkenness, their Obdurateness, have some Intervals of Reason, in which they are sensible, and can view the Truth, in spite of all the Care they take to stifle its Appearance. And of this the greatest Part of the impious Crew who have any Learning, have given us infinite Proofs, since they could not refrain † from declaring their Frights upon many Occasions, and chiefly at such Times as they believ'd themselves upon the Brink of the Grave. * But if there be any of them who die without Fear, these are Prodigies of Stupidity and Ignorance, who have made no Use of their Reason in that which is of greatest Concernment, and never reflected upon the Consequences of Death; for 'tis undeniable, that when one has liv'd ill, he cannot take a View of Eternity as he must do,

† *What Tacitus relates to this Purpose of Tiberius, is very remarkable. Tiberius his verbis exorfuse est, Sc. Dii me Deaq; pejus perdant, quia perire quotidie sentio, si scio: Adeo facinora atq; flagitia, ipsi quoq; in Supplicium verterant. Neq; frustra præstantissimus Sapiencia affirmare solitus est; Si recludantur Tyrannorum mentes, posse aspici laniatus & ictus; quando ut corpora verberibus, ita sævitia, libidine, malis consultis, animus dilaceratur. Quippe Tiberium non fortuna, non libidines protegabant, quin Tormenta pectoris, suasq; ipse pœnas fateretur. Ann. l. VI.*

* Nam veræ voces tum pectore ab imo.

Eliciuntur, & eripitur Persona, manet res.

Lucret. l. 3.

with-

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without being horridly afraid. *Epicurus* himself who talk'd so much, that we ought not to fear Death, nor the Gods; was nevertheless extremely afraid of them, as

* Lib. 1. Nec ququam vidi, qui magis ea quæ timenda esse negaret, timeret, mortem dico & Deos.

Cotta relates, whom

Cicero introduces in his * Treatise of the Nature of the Gods.

Plutarch says the same Thing of all the

Disciples of this Philosopher, in the Discourse he wrote to prove, That no Man can live happily according to the Doctrine of *Epicurus*. And indeed it can hardly be otherwise, since the *Libertines* cannot carry their Infidelity any further than to doubting at most, which is a Condition that must needs throw them into deadly Perplexities: For why? Is it not a very miserable Condition, to be continually expos'd, in spite of all we can do, to the terrible Rebukes of a guilty Conscience, suffering on one Hand the Pain of Remorse, and on the other being depriv'd of the sweet Consolations and ineffable Joys, which the Children of God do feel.

2d. Effect;
is pernicious
to Society.

I say in the Second place, That the Consequences of Irreligion are most pernicious to Civil Society. For Proof of

this I lay it down as an uncontestable Principle, That all Men do naturally desire to be Happy, and consequently would procure to themselves all the Pleasure which they can possibly enjoy without doing themselves any hurt; and therefore

fore a *Libertine* who believes there is neither Punishment nor Happiness to be expected after Death, ought to satisfy his Inclinations, and not to *with-hold his Heart from any Joy*, as the Wise Man says, whenever he finds an opportunity to Indulge his Lusts with safety. If he be addicted to Lewdness, for instance, he will omit no opportunity of corrupting the Women and Maids, with whom he is in Love: If he has receiv'd any Affront, and be of a Revengeful Temper he will endeavour by all means to ruine his Enemies, whatever it cost him: If he wants Money to bestow upon his Pleasures, which commonly require very great Sums, he will make no scruple to be unjust, deceitful, perfidious, or thievish; to betray his best Friends, his Kinsfolk, his Country and his Prince, to obtain the Sums, provided he has Reason to believe that his Actions shall neither be discover'd nor punish'd. Now supposing that the Earth were inhabited by such impious People, What would happen upon this? The Consequences of it are plain: Vertue would be wholly banish'd from Human Society, and Vice would reign with Impunity, and appear every-where with an open Face; Men being void of all esteem for Probity and Equity, there would be no such Thing as a just Prince, a faithful Subject, an uncorrupt Magistrate; there would be no more any affectionate Parents, any obedient Children, any chaste Maids or Wives, any true Friends, any sincerity,
any

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any publick or private Safety, any Peace, or any solid Pleasures. These without any exaggeration are the necessary Consequences of Infidelity, which, if it should become general, would force even the *Libertines* themselves, to use their utmost endeavours to suppress it. If we wanted Examples to confirm what has been said of the dangerous Effects of Irreligion, I could cite a great Number of them; but

it may suffice to read what
 * Salust, Ju- some * ancient Authors have
 venul, &c. written of the Manners of
 the Inhabitants of *Rome*, and

thence it will appear, That after this People had abandon'd all Fear of the Gods, and that the pious Heroes of the preceding Ages, were no more to be found among them, then Pride, Ambition, Avarice, Fraud, Robbery, Adultery, Incest, Murther and all the most enormous Crimes, overspread the Common-Wealth, and turn'd it into a Theatre of most frightful Corruption. 'Tis therefore undeniable that Impiety does always introduce a boundless Licentiousness, which is absolute-

† *Pietate sublata, Fides etiam & Societas Generis humani, & una excellentissima virtus, Justitia tollitur. L. de Nat. Deor.*

* *Σωτηριὸν ἀνδρῶν κοινωσίαν, καὶ κοινωσίαν ἑσθλῶν.*

ly inconsistent with the welfare of Society. *Where there is no Religion*, said † *Cicero*, *there can be neither Faith nor Society, nor Justice, which is the most excellent of all Vertues. Religion according to* † *Platarch,*

is the Bond of all Society, and the Foundation of all Laws: And

* *Silius Italicus* affirms, That the first

* *Heu primæ scelerum
causæ mortalibus ægris,
Naturam nescire Dei*

Cause of the Vices of Men, was their want of the knowledge of God. But what need we alledge the Authority of Wise Men to confirm a Truth, which is so evident, that no reasonable Man can ever doubt of it?

We cannot grant, will the Libertines say, these Consequences against Society to be justly inferr'd from our Sentiment. If the Fear of God, and of his Punishments, oblige us not to the Practice of Vertue, yet we have another Principle which produces the same Effect; and that is Honour, which governs us in all our Actions, and hinders us from doing any Thing that's unworthy of a Man of Honour. I know not if any one can be so simple, as to be satisfyed with this fine Discourse, whether any one, upon such-like Security, would trust with the best Man among these People, his Wife, his Daughter, or any considerable *Depositum*. In troth they must take us for Beasts, if they imagine, that we believe what they call *Honour*, does in Effect endow them with Pro-biry. Let them tell me, if they please, what they mean by a *Man of Honour*. Is it not a Man that professes to live after such a Manner, as gains him Esteem and Glory, and who will do nothing that is hurtful to his Reputation? This is without doubt the best Definition that can be given

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given of him. But when such an one, who does not believe in God, finds out any Means to satiate his Lusts, and to heighten his Joy, without the Knowledge of any Body, and without the lessening his own Reputation, Will this Honour, which is then secur'd, restrain him from making Use of an Occasion that offers itself to him, if he wishes for it with the greatest earnestness? If it be said, that he is incapable of committing a Crime to satisfy himself; I answer, That then he overturns his own Principles, according to which there is not in reality either Vice or Vertue, but all Actions are in themselves indifferent: And if Moral Good and Evil according to him, are nothing but mere Chimera's, 'tis plain, that he ought always to do that which he thinks tends most to make him Happy, when he is fully persuaded, that nothing will happen, which may oblige him to repent of it. And hence it appears, that this fine Word, *Honour*, which these impious Men make such a noise with, is nothing in Effect but an empty Name, or rather a Bait to allure Fools to put a Confidence in them, that they may the more easily deceive them.

From what has been said, any one may easily perceive what great *Honour* the *Libertines* do themselves, by boasting of their Infidelity. Do they not hereby publicly declare, That every time they can gain to themselves an Advantage, and run no Hazard by doing it, they will be perfidious,

ious, Deceivers, Thieves, Traitors, Murderers, Adulterers; in a Word, such compleat Villains, that all the World should be aware of them, and endeavour to drive them out of the Society, as Furioso's and Madmen, who are fit for nothing but to disturb and ruine Mankind? In fine, the disadvantageous Opinion which their impiety gives us of their Inclinations, should oblige them at least to conceal their Sentiments in their own Breast, if they have not so much Reason, or rather so much Probity, as to shake them

Seeing Irreligion is a Crime, which by subverting *Piety*, the true and only principle of a good Life, *overturns the foundations of all publick and private Safety*; therefore all those who have any concern for the Glory of God, who love their own Repose and the Peace of their Country, are oblig'd to use their utmost Efforts, to hinder the Progress of so dangerous an Error, and wholly to root it out, if they can possibly do it. But since Persons of the greatest Authority, are most capable of putting in Execution so Great, so Useful, and so Laudable Design, none can attempt it so effectually as the Sovereign Powers, and consequently none are more oblig'd to do it. And that they may the better succeed in their Attempt, they ought chiefly to apply themselves to these three Things:

They themselves are to set a good

E

V. *Three Means for suppressing Infidelity.*

Example

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Example to their Subjects; They are carefully to hold a strict Hand in the Execution of the Laws; and to prefer none but Persons of Merit and Probity to all Places Ecclesiastical, Civil and Military.

** The Example of Princes is in all Times the Primum Mobile*

** Regis ad Exemplum totus componitur orbis.* which gives Motion to all that are round about them, and generally to all their People. Every one endeavours to please them, and to have a Share in their Favour, to conform himself as much as he can to their Sentiments to imitate their Actions; and therefore 'tis certain that if they be well-instructed in the Truths of Religion, and animated with a holy Zeal for the Glory of God, and live as becomes true Christians

** Non sic inflectere sensus* ** this will be an effectual Means*

Humanos Edicta valent, ut Vita Regentis. drive away from their Court, and from their Dominions,

Vice and Profaneness, and to engage those that depend upon them, to frame their Belief and Behaviour according to such excellent Patterns.

2d. Means, the strict Execution of the Laws. The second Thing which Sovereigns ought to do in banishing Impiety, is to be diligent and careful in the Execution of the Laws. Nothing does more multiply Crimes than Impunity, and if on the contrary Care were taken

the Means for suppressing Infidelity. §1

taken to find them out and punish them, in a little Time they would all be quashed. And therefore let these horrible Blasphemers be severely punish'd, who endeavour by their Discourses and Debaucheries, to extirpate all Sense of Religion and Piety, and we shall quickly see a stop put to their monstrous Fury. 'Tis true, it is impossible for a Prince to know exactly by himself after what Manner all his Subjects live, and how those, to whom he has committed the Care of inspecting their Actions, discharge their Duty: But to remedy this, they need only to choose such Persons as are Knowing, Wise and Vigilant, and of great Probity, who will inform themselves carefully and secretly of all that passes, that they may give in a faithful Report of it to those that entrusted them, and so good and Christian Measures may be taken, which tend to the Glory of God, and the Advantage of the Commonwealth.

The third Precaution which the Higher Powers ought to take, is to fill all Places which are of their Nomination, with such Persons as have all the Qualifications requisite for discharging their Duty conscientiously with good Success. And to this

*3d. Means.
To fill all Offices Ecclesiastical, Civil and Military with Persons of Probity.*

Purpose their first Care should be, to make Choice of learned and pious Pastors, who will instruct their Flocks with Apostolical Preaching, and edify them by a circumspect and blameless Behaviour: For the Ministers of the Gospel having a great

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Influence upon the Minds and Hearts of the People, 'tis certain both the one and the other will be well-disposed if their Guides be unreprouable. In the next Place, Princes ought to take special Care that they do not promote any to Places of Judicature, but Persons of extraordinary Prudence, Integrity and Vigilance; for good Magistrates have it more in their Power than any other Persons whatsoever, to suppress Irreligion and Vice, by the Penalties which they can inflict upon profane and wicked Wretches. In fine, Sovereigns ought not to give the Command of their Troops, but only to such Officers as value the Honour of God above all Things, who will be careful to give a Check to the Swearing and Plundering of the common Souldiers, and to inspire them, by their own Example and good Orders, with Equity, Moderation, and the other Christian Vertues, which are rarely found among Warlike Men; tho' they are not altogether incapable of them, as might be shewn by many Examples.

If Sovereigns, and all those who are entrusted with the Employments of Church and State, would faithfully perform their several Duties, in an Affair of this Importance, I doubt not but we should quickly see Impiety reduc'd to a far narrower Compass than now it is. But since it is very difficult to cure of this Plague all the Persons who are infected with it, I think our principal Care ought to be,

To

To hinder it from gaining Ground and Spreading, especially among the Younger sort of People, whom the love of Pleasures, Ignorance and Vanity, renders more obnoxious to this deadly Contagion. And the best Remedy that can be us'd to preserve them from it, is to instruct them with great care in the Truths of Religion : For if once they clearly perceive the solid Reasons upon which it is founded, and at the same time be made sensible of the Absurdities and pernicious Consequences of Libertinism, whatsoever Temptations they be expos'd to, or even yield to, nothing will ever be able totally to blot out those Idea's, which have been deeply imprinted in their Minds, and which will oblige them sooner or later to return to their Duty. And upon this occasion, I cannot forbear to relate, what I heard from a Person of very good credit, That a young Gentleman, whom he had educated with great care and pains, after he was fully grown up to Man's Estate, confess'd to him sincerely one Day, That he felt in himself an extreme Inclination to sensual Pleasures : *But Sir, added he, however I may lash out, you may be assur'd, I shall never forget the good Instructions you gave me about Religion.* This Example, and an infinite Number of others which might be alledg'd, as to the Effects of a good Education, confirm us in this Opinion, That nothing is of greater Importance, than to give young Men betimes such Christian In-

E 3 structions,

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structions, as may become in them by the blessing of God, the seed of Vertue and Piety, and a Torch which by its Light may conduct them safely into the Harbour of eternal Salvation.

Whereas those who are Rich, and of a higher Rank, are most expos'd to sensual Pleasures, and consequently to the Temptation of doubting about an Eternal Punishment; and besides, they have for the most Part the Management of Publick Affairs, which can never be well Administred but by Persons of a singular Piety; from hence it plainly appears, That they are most concern'd and oblig'd above any other Persons, to take care that their Children be educated in the true Knowledge of Christianity. And for this end they ought to make choice of Men of Merit to be their Preceptors and Governors, who are not only Masters of polite Learning, and understand the World but chiefly of those who perfectly understand Religion, that so they may be able to teach it to their Scholars in an easy agreeable and perspicuous Method, and strongly prepossess them against all the Difficulties, foolish Railleries, and bad Examples of the Infidels. If they be sent to Colledges, or Universities, they must take special care to put them in good Hands, and not to trust the Government of them with any Tutors, but such as will observe them narrowly, and will hinder them from coming into bad Company for the frequenting of it is the most dangerous

gerous

the Means for suppressing Infidelity. 55

gerous Thing in the World for Youth, who having as yet but little Judgment, can neither be so well-instructed, nor so well-confirm'd in the knowledge of the Truth.

If Persons of Quality are under an indispensable Obligation, to take very particular care of the Education of their Children, Persons of an inferior Rank are no more exempt than they from so necessary a Duty. Every one in that Station and Condition wherein God has plac'd him, is bound to use his utmost endeavour to give his Children good and holy Instructions, which is an Inheritance infinitely to be preferr'd above all those other Goods, which Fathers are commonly so passionately desirous to leave their Heirs. But since there are many poor Orphans and other Children whose Parents are neither capable of teaching them themselves, nor yet have means to Pay Masters for their Learning, It would be a Constitution very much for the Glory of God, and the Good of the Commonwealth, to Found, as is already done in many Places of this Kingdom, a great Number of Publick Schools, wherein wise Governours should be placed, who should not only make their Scholars learn, and repeat by Heart a little Catechism, but also should be capable of explaining, and imprinting deeply upon their Minds, the most clear and sensible Proofs of the Christian Religion, and the Obligations which all Christians lie under to practise its Precepts.

§6 INTRODUCTION, *shewing*

These I think are the principal Measures which are to be follow'd for *suppressing Impiety, and hindring its deadly Progress*. I confess, that the unconcernedness of most Christians, as to the Advancement of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, renders the execution of this Great Design very difficult: For being wholly taken up with their own Interest or Diversions, they scarce ever think of the Means of establishing the true Religion. But how great soever the Obstacles are we meet with in this important Affair, yet they are not invincible, provided that Persons in Authority would seriously lay the Matter to Heart, and carefully use the Means which I have describ'd: And especially if they would severely punish *Libertinism*, which, to our shame, has now for a long time appear'd barefac'd among us, I am very certain, that *Piety* would quickly resume the Place that is due to it, and that the remnant of Infidels and Debauchees, if they do not forsake their Error and Vice, would be forc'd at least to act the Part of good Men in disguise. What Joy would this be to the Faithful, to see then the Return of the happy Age of the Apostles! If God does still reserve this signal Favour to any Generation, we have Reason to expect he should grant it in our Days to these flourishing Kingdoms. And of this Two Things give me some hopes: The First is, That God being mov'd with Compassion for these Nations, and for the poor Heathens who lie

lie in Darkneſs and the Shadow of Death, did ſome Years ago put this good and pious Thought into the Hearts of a great Number of Perſons, very conſiderable for their Learning, Rank, Eſtates, Credit and Zeal, to form Societies for the Reformation of Manners, and for the Propagation of the Faith. All the World knows the happy Beginnings, which the Divine Goodneſs has already given, to the Means they made uſe of for putting this Project in Execution. The Second Thing is this, That it hath pleas'd God in his Providence to Place upon the Throne, a Princeſs who has conſtantly teſtified in the whole Courſe of her Life, an extraordinary Paſſion for the Eſtabliſhment of Piety: One who being ſenſibly troubled for the ſhameful Debauchery, which has ſo long disgrac'd the Church of God, has begun to ſuppreſs it with no leſs Zeal than Succeſs. And what ſhe has already done, is to us a good Security that ſhe will perſiſt in ſo laudable an Undertaking, and that at laſt ſhe will be able, by her own Example and by her wiſe Government, to give a Check to that Impetuous Torrent of Irreligion and Immorality which has broken in upon us. And ſhall not Her great Zeal be capable of doing this, if, as we ought to hope, She is powerfully ſeconded in her good Intentions by the Two Houſes of Her Parliament, who are ſo much concern'd to make true Religion and pure Morality flouriſh, for the pub-

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publick Peace and welfare of the Kingdom?
And if by the Care of Her Majesty, and
of that August Assembly, and of those
Societies above-mention'd, we see at last
Impiety banish'd out of these Countries,
I doubt not but other Protestant Princes,
being encourag'd by this Example, will
follow it with all their Heart, and use
their utmost endeavours, to banish utterly
all Profaneness and Debauchery from
among them. May it please God to in-
spire these good Thoughts into all Chri-
stians, and so to touch the Consciences of
the Infidels, that they acknowledging sin-
cerely, the solid force of the Proofs for
our most holy Religion, may no longer
make any Difficulty of being Converted,
but give Glory to God by confessing the
Truth.

BOOK.

BOOK I.

Of the Three first and fundamental Truths of all Religion :

*The Existence of a God,
A Providence,*

AND

The Immortality of the Soul.

CHAP. I.

Of the Existence of a God,

I Think, it may be safely affirm'd without any straining, That there never was any Assertion better prov'd, more certain, nor more generally receiv'd, than that *of the Existence of a God*. It is a Truth that is common to all Times, to all People, to all Religions, and lies Level to the Capacity of all Sorts
of

of Persons. The wise and powerful Author of the Universe, has imprinted upon all his Creatures so many Signatures of his Divine Hand, that it is in a manner impossible, but those even of the meanest Understanding, must acknowledge God in his Works. This requires not any great Enquiry, or profound Meditation; You need only open your Eyes, to behold the different Bodies which compose this vast and admirable Machine, and consider the wonderful Structure of our own Body and the Nature of our Soul; nay you need do no more but think of a God, to be fully convinc'd that he exists. The Evidence of these Testimonies is so sensible, the Mind is so naturally affected by them, that no Man can be an Atheist, but he must reject the clearest and strongest Impressions he feels in himself, and act contrary even to his own Essence; which, according to the Philosopher *Jamblicus*, consists in knowing God, on whom he Depends. *He that dares deny a Supreme Being*, says *Avicenna*, *has not only lost his Reason, but even his Sense*. He is no more a Man, he is, as *David* affirms, a Fool, whose prodigious Corruption has extinguish'd the most evident Notions of his Understanding. But indeed, there is scarce any Probability, that ever such a Monster did really exist, and that any one should be found, who carried his extravagance so far as to Atheism. If therefore we sometimes meet with People so insolent and bold as to maintain that

that there is no God, there is great Reason to believe, that tho' their Heart be wholly deprav'd, their Mind did never fully consent to the Blasphemy of their Mouth; but that they did only for some Time, while they liv'd in Peace and Health, stifle the Belief of a Doctrine so frightful to them, whose Evidence will certainly awaken again upon the least pressing Danger that befalls them. In the mean Time tho' the attacking this abominable Impiety, may perhaps be no better than fighting with an Airy Phantome; yet since no Man can be too much convinc'd of this first Principle, *That there is a God*, or think too often upon it, I will now propose in a few Words, and as clearly as I can, some of the principal Demonstrations upon which it is founded.

P R O O F the First;

Taken from the Impossibility of the Eternity of Matter.

BEfore I enter upon this Proof, I must premise a Reflection very remarkable concerning the Blindness of Atheists, viz. That those who reject the Existence of a God, because they cannot conceive this infinite Being, are forc'd to attribute to Matter, as the first Foundation of their Opinion, a Property which confounds their Imagination, and is no less inconceivable

ceivable than any of those, which they are so unwilling to acknowledge in God. For what is more inconceivable than Eternity in itself, and especially the Eternity of such a Being as Matter? Is there any Thing more unreasonable than this proceeding of the Atheists? But to shew them how much they are mistaken, I shall now positively and plainly prove, That their Supposition is false: And if it be made appear, that Matter cannot be Eternal, from hence it will necessarily follow, since nothing can give a Being to itself, that it was produc'd by an Agent infinitely Perfect. Thus then I Argue:

If Matter is Eternal, then it will follow 1. That this Property must be a consequent of Extension, which is the Essence of Matter:

If Matter is Eternal, as the Atheists maintain, it must be so by Nature, and consequently Eternity

must be its Essential Property. This is undeniable. Now if Eternity is Essential to Matter it must proceed from that Property which we conceive first in it, and

wherein its Essence consists,

** I add this Word to remove all Ambiguity, with Respect to those who believe a Vacuum.*

*viz. * Solid Extension, from which Result all its other Properties, such as Divisibility, Impenetrability, and Figure in general: But is there not full Evidence, That Eternity is not a consequent of Extension, and that it does not so much as enter any Way into the Idea which we have of Matter? So far is it from being so, that we can perceive nothing either in the whole or in its Parts, which bears*

the least Mark of this Perfection, or gives the least Occasion to think of it. I add, That if we view it well, if we endeavour to represent it as Eternal, and then carefully enquire, how and wherefore a Being which appears to us so vile, should enjoy so excellent a Property, it will plainly appear, that the Notion which we have of Eternity, is altogether inconsistent with that which we have of Matter.

2. I say in the second Place, that if Matter is Eternal, it must exist from itself. But 'tis evident, that To exist from itself is the first and most excellent of all Perfections, which must necessarily include all the other: And therefore if Matter exists thus from itself, it must be Independent, Unmoveable, Almighty, in a Word infinitely Perfect. But who can believe, that this Substance which is Divisible, Corruptible, Unactive, void of Understanding, and so Vile, that as some have said very well, it is the next Remove from Nothing, should be endow'd with the first and most considerable of all Properties, from which all other Perfections do necessarily proceed. This is a plain Contradiction which perfectly overthrows the Hypothesis of the Atheists.

3. If Matter exists from itself, from hence it will follow, that it exists by an absolute Necessity. But this Kind of

2. That it exists from itself, and so is most perfect.

3. That it exists by an absolute Necessity.

Necessity

Necessity — is so far from being included in the Notion we have of this Substance, that it would rather appear to us altogether impossible that it should exist, if we were not convinc'd by our Reason, that it holds its Existence and Duration from an Almighty Being which is absolutely Perfect.

4. That there is but one Numerical Substance.

4. In fine if Matter is Eternal, and consequently Infinite, Almighty, Independent, &c. From hence it must evidently follow, that there is but one Numerical Substance, as *Spinoza* was oblig'd to affirm; for if there were in the Universe, several Eternal Substances, there would then be a plurality of Beings equally Infinite, Almighty, Independent, &c. which implies a Contradiction. But does it not plainly appear, that the World is composed of innumerable Substances really distinct from one another? and do not we clearly perceive, that the least Atom can subsist, tho all the other Parts of Matter were annihilated?

5. All these Conclusions which I have inferr'd from the Eternity of Matter are false, and therefore Matter is not Eternal.

5. From all that I have already demonstrated, it necessarily follows, that Matter is not Eternal; and if it is not, since Nothing can never produce any Being, as I have already observ'd, 'tis absolutely necessary, that it should be produc'd by a Cause Immaterial,

material, Eternal, Infinite, Intelligent, Independent, Unmoveable, Almighty, in a Word infinitely Perfect, which is God.

My design'd Brevity will not permit me to enlarge further upon these Reasons, which doubtless will appear convincing to all Persons who understand Thinking, and have been a little accusom'd to abstracted Meditations. As to those to whom they are altogether New, perhaps it will be difficult at first to conceive what I have said; but I pray them not to lay it quite aside for this Reason, and to think of it often with a close Attention: And I am certain, that if they would give themselves this small trouble, they would at last clearly understand it, and also be as fully perswaded, as the Philosophers who are versed in *Metaphysicks*. I proceed now to another Demonstration that is suited to the Capacity of all Mankind.

The second P R O O F.

Taken from the Impossibility, That Matter should move itself.

IF it be evident that Matter cannot be Eternal, I think, it is yet more evident, that it cannot move itself. For the better understanding of this Truth, we need only reflect with some attention upon the Idea we have of Matter. What we plainly perceive in it is, that it is Extended, Solid, Divisible, Impenetrable and
F capable

capable of receiving all sorts of Motions and Figures. But, whatever way we View it, we cannot perceive in it any active Principle, any *Power to move it self, i. e.* to translate it self from one Place to another. On the contrary, when we represent to our Selves a Body at rest, we conceive with all possible clearness, that it must needs continue in this State, until some external Cause put it in Motion. Now since we cannot affirm, that a Being has such a Property or not, but only because we clearly perceive, that this Property is or is not included in the Idea which we have of that Being, we ought certainly to conclude, that no Body has in itself a Principle of Motion, since we plainly perceive that *the Power of moving itself* cannot agree to the Idea we have of Matter.

I add, That if Matter moves of itself, then Motion is a Property essential to Matter: This is an undeniable Consequence. Now that which is essential to any Thing, can never be separated from that Thing until it ceases to be what it is. As for Instance, Extension, Divisibility, Impenetrability, which are essential to Matter, cannot be separated from it, until it ceases to be Matter. If therefore Motion is essential to Matter, it cannot be separated from it, *i. e.* it cannot cease to move itself, without ceasing to be Matter; which is plainly contrary to Experience. Add to this, that what is Essential to a Subject is indivisible, and will not admit
of

of more or less, and therefore, if Motion is Essential to Matter, it must of Necessity move always with the same Swiftneſs; but we ſee the contrary, that it ſometimes moves more ſwiftly, and ſometimes more ſlowly: And this is the cleareſt Evidence, that its Motion is only a Mode, an Accident, that comes from a Foreign Cauſe which makes this Difference.

If therefore it is absolutely impoſſible for Matter to move itſelf, as I have juſt now demonſtrated by undeniable Arguments, from hence it neceſſarily follows, that it is mov'd by a Being Immaterial, Infinite, Almighty, Unmoveable, in a Word by a Being absolutely Perfect, which is God.

The Third P R O O F.

*Taken from the wonderful Order of the Parts of the Universe, And the ſi-
nal Cauſes we obſerve in the diſfe-
rent Bodies it contains.*

THIS Proof is founded upon two undeniable Truths. The firſt is, That all the Parts of the Universe are not diſpoſed in that Order in which they now are, by an Underſtanding and Wiſdom inherent in themſelves; for if this were ſo, then all Bodies whatſoever, even to the leaſt Atom, muſt neceſſarily be endow'd with theſe Qualities.

Two Preliminary Truths.

1. Matter is void of Underſtanding.

'Tis true, that some ancient Philosophers imagin'd that all the Particles of Matter had some kind of Life, but they did not attribute to them any internal Sensation of what pass'd within themselves, nor any reflex Knowledge. If they had been so extravagant, 'tis certain they would never have had a great Number of Followers; since there is no Person so simple as to imagine, that there is not a single Corpuscle in the World, which is not an Intelligent Being. It is therefore altogether unquestionable, that the Particles of Matter, were not by their own contrivance, deliberation and knowledge, plac'd in that Order in which they are, both with respect to the Universe in general, and to the different Bodies of which it consists.

2. *It is dispos'd after such a Manner, as plainly shews, that it is design'd for certain Ends.*

The Second Truth is, That the greatest Part of the Beings which the Universe contains, are fram'd and dispos'd after such a Manner, as plainly shews, that they are design'd for some Ends. And to this purpose it is chiefly to be observ'd, that the different Parts of organized Bodies do most clearly appear to be fram'd for producing the several Effects which proceed from them. Now if these Two Truths are undeniable, *i. e.* If it be certain that Matter is devoid of all Understanding, and that otherwise there are in the World an infinite Number of Things which plain-

plainly appear to be made with Design, and which bear the plain Marks of Understanding and Wisdom, since Matter has no such Properties, we must necessarily acknowledge, that it could not be the efficient Cause of so many wonderful Bodies, and consequently we must have recourse to another Cause, which can be nothing else, but a Substance Intelligent, Immaterial, Infinite, Almighty, All-Wise, in a Word most Perfect, which is God.

*From whence
it follows it
has been so dis-
posed by an in-
telligent and
immaterial
Being.*

The Atheist not being able to deny the Consequence, which naturally follows from these two Principles I have laid down, hath thought fit to deny the Second, and to maintain, impudently enough, That there is no such thing in the World as a Final Cause, *i. e.* That nothing acts with any design to produce certain Effects; and they choose rather to contradict the strongest Evidence of Sense and Reason, than to acknowledge in the wonderful Mechanism of the Universe, and of organized Bodies, those signatures of Wisdom and Contrivance, which would force them to Confess that there is a God. This prodigious Madness deserves, no other Answer but this: *Open your Eyes and consider*, without entring upon any long Discourse, to confute so gross an Error. In effect is it Reasonable for any Man to trouble himself to prove to one that wilfully shuts his Eyes, that it is Day at Noon? And yet if those we have to do

with, were really in so strange a State of Blindness, and would hearken to our Reasons with a sincere Desire of discovering the Truth, Charity would oblige us to endeavour to restore their Sight. But is it not manifest, that it is only from a Spirit of Pride and Obstinacy, that they oppose the Proofs we produce, tho' they cannot but be sensible of the force of them as well as we? Yet notwithstanding their bad Temper, I will represent to them some of those Wonders, which daily strike their Eyes without touching their Heart: I say some, for since there are so many excellent Treatises written upon this noble Subject, and my Design is to be short, I will not enter upon a long Discourse, lest I should make a needless Repetition of all that has been so often said already.

*Destination
of the Matter
to certain
Ends asserted
by many In-
stances.*

First then I ask of the Infidels, Whether they do not perceive some Marks of Understanding in the Fabrick of the World, and of all its Parts? Do they believe, that the Motion of the Stars was at first begun, and has since with so much constant regularity continued for so many Ages, by mere blind Chance? Do they imagine, that the Motion of the Sun from East to West, and that by which he keeps exactly in the same Points of the Zodiac from one Tropick to another, were not design'd among other Ends, the former, to give us successively Day and Night,
and

and the other, to give us the several Seasons of the Year? Or if it be the Earth which moves about the Sun, which perhaps no good Astronomer now doubts of, Do they think that the Motion it makes upon its own Center, in the Space of four and twenty Hours, and that by which it inclines by little and little its *Axis* towards the Poles of Heaven, after such a manner as is naturally unaccountable, are not design'd to produce the same Effects which I have just now observ'd? Will they pretend that the Rain does not fall to render the Earth fruitful, and to hinder it from becoming by Drought a barren Heap of Dust? Have they never reflected upon the Beauty and Necessity of so many fine Rivers, which by their Winding Course, water an infinite number of rich Fields and smiling Meadows, and at the same Time facilitate in a manner so agreeable the Voyages, and Commerce of Men? Have not they observ'd, among the other Wonders of the Sea, its Saltness, and the regular Motion of its Flux and Reflux, which are so necessary to hinder that vast Abyss of Waters from becoming an Ocean of Corruption, which would infect all the Inhabitants of the Earth? But above all, can they be so stark blind, as not to perceive in Organiz'd Bodies the plain Design of their several Parts to a Thousand particular Uses? The Configuration of the Pores of Plants, the Texture of their Fibres, their Roots, their Trunk, the Pith contain'd

in them, the Barks that cover them, and an infinite Number of other Organs, which are suited to prepare and distribute the Juices of the Earth, just so as is necessary to produce Leaves, Flowers, Fruit and Seeds according to their several Kinds; Does all this appear to them so well-order'd without any Design? But if these Things be worthy of our Admiration, the incomparable Structure of the Machine of Animals is yet much more so. Have not our pretended great Wits, taken Notice of the Structure of the Wings of Birds, and of the Fins of Fishes, which are now so well understood? And are they so stupid as not to perceive, that this Kind of Oars are made on purpose to cleave the fluid Elements which are given to these Creatures for their Portion? If they will not take the Pains to contemplate the Objects without them, yet let them consider a little themselves, let them examine carefully the different Parts of their own Body which they make an Idol of; and then let them tell me, whether the Bones, among other Uses be not made to support and strengthen it; The Nerves, Tendons and Muscles to move it? Whether the Hands are not made for Grasping, the Hips, Legs and Feet for Walking, the Eyes for Seeing, the Ears for Hearing, the Nose for Smelling, the Lips, Teeth, Tongue and Palate, for Speaking, Eating and Tasting Meat, the Stomach for Digesting it, the lacteal Veins for carrying the Chyle into a Receptacle, from

from whence it passes by the subclavial Veins into the right Ventricle of the Heart ; the Veins and Arteries for the Circulation of the Blood in all Parts of the Body ; the Valves of the Veins for hindring the Blood to return whence it came ; the Heart to maintain the Motion and Heat of the Blood, the Lungs for refreshing and enlivening the Blood with the Air which they draw in? But it would be endless to recount all the Uses, to which the prodigious Number of Organs, of which our Body consists, are plainly design'd. The greatest part of these Ends are so visible, that persons of the grossest wit can easily perceive them. If the Infidels are not satisfy'd with this superficial detail I have made, let them consult some able and Judicious Anatomist, and he will discover to them in the Formation of our Machine, so many surprizing Wonders, which perhaps will at last force them to acknowledge the Almighty Hand of him who is the Artificer, and to admire with

* *Galen*, (who hath wrote such an excellent Treatise of the Use of the Parts of Animals) the Wisdom, Power and Goodness of that Sovereign Being, who fram'd us so artificially.

Seeing therefore it is most evident and undeniable, That the Universe, and all the Bodies in it are design'd for dif-

The Consequence of this Designing.

ferent

ferent Ends, That the Ends of any Work are certain Signs of the Understanding of the Artificer, and that Matter is utterly devoid of all Sense and Knowledge, from hence we must necessarily conclude, that the World and all Things it contains, is the Workmanship of a God infinitely Powerful, infinitely Wise, infinitely Good, in a Word, infinitely Perfect.

The Excellency of this Proof.

This Demonstration is without all Dispute the most sensible, the most forcible, best suited to all Capacities, of any that can be propos'd to prove the Existence of a God; and it has this peculiar to it above all others, that at the same time it convinces the Mind, it fills it also with Admiration, and affects the Heart with a lively Sense of Love and Gratitude to this Supreme Being, who has condescended to heap upon Man so many Favours, tho' he be inconsiderable and unworthy of them. 'Tis for this Reason doubtless, that the sacred Writers have preferr'd this sort of Proof to all others, and that they have urged it in many Places of their Writings as most proper to give us the right Knowledge of our Creator, and to induce us to pay him with all Reverence our Adoration and Homage. *Ask now the Beasts, says holy Job, and they shall teach thee, and the Fowls of the Air, and they shall tell thee, Or, speak to the Earth, and it shall teach thee; and the Fishes of the Sea shall declare unto thee.*

Natural Religion Asserted. 75

thee. Who knoweth not that in all these, the Hand of the Lord hath wrought this?

Job 12. 7, 8, 9.

* *Quis est tam vecors, qui cum suspexerit in Cælum, Deos esse non sentiat, & ea quæ tanta mente fiunt, ut vix quisquam arte ulla ordinem rerum ac vicissitudinem persequi possit, casu fieri putet?*
Cicer. Orat. de Harusp. Responsis.

* *The Heavens, says David, Psal. 19. 1, 3. declare the Glory of God: And the Firmament sheweth his handy Work. There is no Speech, nor Language, where their Voice is not heard. It is God, saith the same David,*

Psal. 135. v. 7. Who causeth the Vapours to ascend from the Ends of the Earth. He maketh Lightnings for the Rain: He bringeth the Wind out of his Treasuries. I will praise Thee, says the same Prophet, in Psal. 139. 14. for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, marvelous are thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth right well. The invisible Things of God, says St. Paul, Rom. 1. 20. from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead. i. e. his Goodness. Thus we see how these holy Men demonstrated the Existence of a God. They believed that the World was as it were one great Volume, wherein the most ignorant might read in great Characters this important Truth, and they were verily persuaded, that if there was any People so senseless, or rather so corrupt, that they could not perceive the Creator in the faithful Representation which all the Creatures make to

us of him, it would be in vain to employ other Arguments to convince them of their Error.

Nevertheless how evident soever the Existence of a God is, when we consider attentively the magnificent Structure of the Universe, and so many different Machines, all whose Springs do plainly tend to some End, yet there are some impious Wretches, who endeavour to cast a Mist over this bright

object. 1st. Evidence. If the World was fram'd, say they, by an Intelligent Being, Almighty, and All-wise, whence comes it to pass, that there are some Creatures which appear not to be made with any Design? And why does he in those which are best fitted with Organs, fail sometimes of his Ends, and produce Monsters instead of perfect Animals.

Answer 1st. To this insolent Objection

I answer, first, That tho' it were true, that we cannot perceive any Ends, for which some Creatures are design'd, it would by no means follow thence, that they have none, since we have Reason to be fully persuaded by what we clearly perceive in others, that God is infinitely wise, and consequently, can do nothing without some Design. All that can be reasonably concluded from hence, that we cannot discover any Use of certain Things, is this, That we are short-sighted and very ignorant. * The

* See Boyle
of final Causes.

Philosophers, who have most
ex-

exactly studied Nature, and who are better able to reason than our Infidels, do positively assure us that nothing is made in vain, and if they do not always clearly perceive the Design of the Creator, their want of understanding does not hinder them from believing firmly, that he produces nothing without such Reasons as are agreeable to his Perfections.

I answer in the second *2d. Answer.*
Place, That as all the Works of Men have not the Characters of Wisdom equally evident, and their different Uses will not always permit, that one should be as admirable as the other; So it is likewise in the Works of God: But when we see plainly in the greatest Part of them a wonderful Structure, this is sufficient Ground for us to affirm for certain, That they are all the Productions of a Being infinitely Perfect.

Lastly, As to Monsters I *3d. Answer.*
say, That their Defects ought not to make us doubt of God's forming them, since the Structure of one single Member is an undeniable Proof that they are not the Effects of blind Chance, but of an Intelligent Being, whose infinite Power and Wisdom cannot be call'd in Question. All then that can be inferr'd from these extraordinary Productions, is this, That the Ways of God are not our Ways, and that we ought to adore in an awful Silence the Conduct of Providence,

vidence, when it appears incomprehensible by our feeble Reason.

But if I may be allow'd to add something to this Answer for clearing up a little this Difficulty, I would say, That ordinarily God, in the Formation and Preservation of his Creatures, acts according to certain Laws, he has prescrib'd to himself. If it were not so, there would appear no Order in his Actions, and we could not distinguish what happens naturally, *i. e.* according to establish'd Laws, from what is done supernaturally, *i. e.* contrary to the ordinary Course establish'd by these Laws. This then being suppos'd, 'tis plain, That if natural Agents working according to these Laws, upon some Occasions meet with some Impediments, there must necessarily happen something extraordinary to that which is form'd according to these Laws, at least if God think not fit to remove the Impediments by a Miracle. *But then, Will the Infidels reply, Why did not God establish such Laws as should not be subject to any Inconvenience?* To this I answer in general, That God being Independent and Sovereignly free, he can act as he pleases, and we have no right to blame any thing in his Conduct. *Shall the Thing, to use these excellent Words of St. Paul, say unto him that form'd it, Why hast thou made me thus?* Rom. 9. 20. We are too ignorant to pretend to understand all the Motives of his Actions, and too little to dare to dispute with him. But more particularly

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I answer, That God was so far from being oblig'd to establish other Laws, that it was becoming his Wisdom to make Use of such, since by acting according to them, or by directing them to his own Ends, he could, without being oblig'd to work Miracles continually, exercise his Mercy or Justice towards Men, whenever he should think it convenient. Thus by the former and latter Rain, by plentiful Harvests, by a vigorous Health, by a long Life, or by some other natural Blessings, he gives his Creatures the Testimonies of his Paternal Goodness; and on the contrary by continual Rains, or by extreme Drought, by terrible Storms, by Shipwrecks, by Plagues or by some other such-like Cause, he chastises them in his Anger. It may also be upon one or other of these Accounts, that monstrous Births happen, and 'tis very probable that God does either permit them to punish the Sins of the Fathers and Mothers, or to hinder these Infants from falling into some Extravagancies, to which he foresees by his Omniscience, that they would abandon themselves, if they were not restrain'd by this Reason of humbling themselves.

I add to this, that if God had made Laws which should always have produc'd the same Effects, after such a Manner that no Variation ever appeared, Two Inconveniences among others, would follow upon it, which seem to me contrary to his infinite Wisdom. The first is,

is, that he could never do any thing contrary to the Order thus establish'd, without working such Miracles as should be sensible to all the World: By which Means the Impious themselves would be forc'd to acknowledge his Almighty Hand, and to submit, whether they will or no, to the Truths of Religion, altho' the Discovery and Belief of them, ought to be the Prize only of those who love them sincerely, and seek after them with all their Heart. Thus it appears very reasonable, that second Causes should be such as God may conceal himself under them as under a dark Veil, and act miraculously as often as he shall think fit, without being perceiv'd save only by his Elect, whose sharp-sighted Faith discovers him clearly thro' the thick Clouds, while the Men of this World will not commonly stoop to take the least Notice of his wonderful Conduct. The second Inconvenience is, that Men who are naturally corrupt and ignorant, would accustom themselves by Degrees to attribute all the Events of the World to these unalterable Laws, without ever ascending to the first Cause. It is therefore convenient and necessary, that extraordinary things should sometimes happen, to humble the Pride of these great Philosophers, by the Impossibility of explaining these Things from natural Causes, to oblige the most harden'd Sinners to think there is a God, who manages all the Motions of the Universe by his good Providence;
and

and lastly, to strengthen the Faith, Holiness and Hope of good Men, by the Signs of the Presence of their Creator, who then manifests himself after a peculiar Manner.

The second and most common Objection which the Atheists make against the incomparable Structure of the Universe in general, and all the organized Bodies in particular, is this, *That all these Things which are the Object of our Admiration, are only the Effects of Nature.* 2d. *Objection.*

This indeed is soon said, *Answer.* and so it requires no long Study to free themselves from this Difficulty in a Trice. But in good earnest, can those People who profess to believe nothing upon slight Grounds, satisfy themselves with such a Subterfuge? Let them tell me what they mean by *Nature*. Is it an intelligent Being or not? If it be devoid of all Knowledge, how can it frame all these excellent Works, which have so many visible Marks of exceeding great Wisdom? Is it conceivable, that blind Chance should be capable of producing constantly, with so much Order and Regularity, those Bodies which are the chief Masterpieces of the most eminent Reason? But if *Nature* is a Being endow'd with Understanding, it must be acknowledg'd that it is the same thing.

* *Natura*, inquit, hæc mihi præstat. Non intelligis te, cum hoc dicis, mutare Nomen Deo? Quid enim aliud est *Natura* quam Deus, & divina Ratio toti mundo, & partibus ejus inserta? *Senec. de Benef. L. 4.*

with a God or a Providence, as all the * wise Philosophers understood by it.

But if the Atheists say, that they understand by *Nature* the Mechanism of Matter, *i. e.* the different Scituation and Configuration of its Parts, acting by regular Motions, and that by this Mechanism all Things are made; I ask of them, Whether they conceive that this blind and senseless Matter, could of itself acquire, in a precise Exactness, such Qualities and Motions as are necessary for placing itself just in that good Order, in which we now see all Things, and for producing always regularly that surprizing Variety of so many admirable Bodies? Do they clearly perceive, That by a mere Mechanism, which is not manag'd with any Understanding, out of a small Portion of Matter, which is almost Homogeneal (such as the Seed of Plants and Animals is) so prodigious a Number of different Organs could be form'd, of which these Creatures consist? Certainly if they can believe all this, they must renounce their Title to Incredulity, in which they glory so much, and rank themselves among the most credulous Fops of all Mankind. Now to extricate themselves from so gross an Error, they need only consider attentively

tively the *Idea* they have of Matter; and because they will perceive very clearly, that it has not in itself, any Principle of Knowledge or Activity, and that it is perfectly indifferent to all sorts of Figures, Scituations and Motions, they will be oblig'd to conclude, as we do, that 'tis absolutely impossible, that such a Being should be the Efficient Cause of an infinite Number of Wonderful Works, which have so many undeniable Signatures of the most accomplish'd Wisdom.

I have enlarg'd the more upon this Article, because it is one of the most Important, and the *Libertines* being accustomed from their Infancy to behold the wonderful Works that are round about them, never make any Reflection upon them, and think them altogether unworthy of their Enquiry and Admiration, because they look upon them as the Effects of blind Chance, of which the ablest among them have only a false *Idea*, and the rest have none at all.

The Fourth P R O O F,

Taken from the Immateriality of the Soul.

IF the Souls of Men are Immaterial, 'tis impossible, that they should be produc'd by Matter; This is plain: And if it appears, that these Souls did not al-

ways exist, as no Person ever doubted of it, we must of necessity conclude, That since Nothing cannot of itself pass into Being, that they are produc'd by a Spirit infinitely Perfect, and consequently that there is a God. Now that the Soul is Immaterial, is a Truth which I hope to demonstrate in the Chapter where I shall treat of its Immortality.

The Fifth P R O O F,

Taken from the Idea we have of God.

I Shall now present you with a Demonstration which has made a great deal of noise among the modern Philosophers, and which notwithstanding its Evidence, has met with some Opposers: But I am persuaded, that if those who call'd it in Question, had rightly apprehended it, they would not have scrupled to yield their assent to it. I shall therefore endeavour to propose it in a few Words, and in a Manner so clear that it may be understood by all Mankind. Thus then I argue.

That which is necessarily included in the clear and distinct *Idea* we have of any Object, must of necessity be in that Object; but Actual Existence is necessarily included in the *Idea* we have of a Being most perfect, and therefore a Being most perfect does necessarily exist.

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The first Proposition is undeniable: Nay it may be call'd an Axiom, which is the only Rule, by which we distinguish Truth from Falshood. For why do we believe any Property to belong to a Subject, but only because the *Idea* of that Property is necessarily included in that which we have of the Subject: And on the contrary, why do we believe, that a Property does not, or cannot belong to a Subject, but because the *Idea* of that Property is not, or cannot be included in the *Idea* we have of the Subject? As, for instance, Why do we believe that there are Three Angles in a Triangle, but because the *Idea* of Three Angles is necessarily contain'd in the *Idea* of a Triangle? We are also equally certain, That a Circle is not a Square, because the *Idea* we have of a Circle, is so far from agreeing with that which we have of a Square, that it is plainly inconsistent with it, and these Two cannot possibly subist in the same Subject: And therefore it is a Truth unquestionable, that what is necessarily included in the *Idea* we have of a Subject, must necessarily be in that Subject. As to the Second Proposition, That actual Existence is necessarily included in the *Idea* we have of a Being most perfect, it is no less evident: For Existence being a Perfection as essential to a Being most perfect, as all its other Perfections, 'tis plain that we cannot rightly conceive this Being without conceiving that it really exists, and that it would be no less

impossible to represent it to our Minds without this Attribute, than to Imagine the Figure of a Triangle without Three Angles, because these Two Properties are equally necessary to these Two different Subjects. And therefore it is undeniable, that Existence is necessarily included in the *Idea* of a most perfect Being.

These Two Propositions being thus evidently demonstrated, the Third which is a just Consequence from them, must necessarily be true, *viz.* That a most perfect Being does necessarily exist.

But some perhaps will say, The diversity of *Ideas*, which the generality of Men have of a God, is an Argument that the Notion we have of him is an Effect of our Imagination, and therefore nothing can be inferr'd from it in favour of the Existence of a God. To this I answer, by distinguishing Two sorts of *Idea's*; one which are agreeable to their Objects, and consequently true, the other which are not agreeable, and consequently are false. The latter attributing to their Objects such Qualities as they have not, are upon that account pure Chimera's, which the Imagination produces, and which it can diversify at its Pleasure. Of this Nature are the *Idea's* of those, who attribute to a most perfect Being such Properties as are so far from being essential, that they are utterly inconsistent with it. As to those *Idea's* which are agreeable to their Objects, 'tis plain, that they do not wise depend upon our Fancy, but upon the
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the Beings which are the Objects of them. Such is the *Idea* of those who conceive a Being most perfect, as necessarily possessing all sorts of Perfections. Seeing this *Idea* is agreeable to its Object, and includes only such Properties as are essentially necessary to it, 'tis plain that it does not at all depend upon our Will, and that it is no less invariable than the most perfect Being it represents.

It is objected moreover, That nothing can be inferr'd from the Existence which is necessarily contain'd in the *Idea* of a Being most perfect, but only this, That if there be a most perfect Being, this Being does exist necessarily. I answer, That this Objection supposes, That Actual Existence is not a Property necessary to a most perfect Being, which is plainly false: for I have shown, that it is as necessary to this Being as it is to the *Idea* we have of it. I add, That this Objection is just as if one should say, If a Being most perfect exists, then a Being most perfect exists, or, for instance, If there be Three Angles in a Triangle, then there are Three Angles in a Triangle, which is ridiculous.

Lastly, others object, That we have no *Idea* at all of a most perfect Being, and therefore nothing can be concluded from this Argument. I answer First, That tho' it were true, that those who make this Objection, had not indeed any such *Idea*, nevertheless what I have said would be a certain Demonstration with respect to

those Persons, who are well-assur'd by their inward Sensation that they have this *Idea*: just as one who hath no *Idea* of a Triangle, cannot thence infer that Three Angles are not necessarily in a Triangle, and that I who know that I have an *Idea* of a Triangle, have no reason to believe the Conclusion I have drawn from it. I answer in the Second Place, That if there be any Persons who say they have not any *Idea* of a most perfect Being, we ought not to believe them. To prove that what they say is not true, If they were ask'd, what they understand by a most perfect Being, no doubt they would Answer a Being immaterial, eternal, intelligent, infinite, immoveable, independent, almighty, all-wise, all-just, all-good, who exists necessarily, and possesses all other Perfections in an infinite Degree: Now can they say, that they have no *Idea* of these Properties? And if they say so, who will believe them? Tis true, that we have not a compleat *Idea* of these Infinite Properties, because our Mind being finite, we cannot perfectly comprehend them. But nevertheless the *Idea* which we have of them, is evident in respect of what we know of them, and we have Reason to draw from thence this Consequence, That a most perfect Being necessarily exists.

The Sixth P R O O F,

Taken from the Universal Consent of
all Mankind.

There is nothing more certain than that the Existence of God has been believ'd in all Ages, in all Countries of the World, and by all Men, whether Greeks or Barbarians, Learned or Ignorant. For Proof of this Truth, we need only read the Sacred and Profane Histories which still remain, and there we shall see that all People which are mention'd in them, have acknowledg'd some Deity, and honour'd him with some Worship. * *All Men*, says Aristotle, *are persuaded, that there are Gods. There is no Person among the Barbarians*, says † *Eliau*, *neither Indian, Gaul nor Egyptian, who makes any doubt but that there are Gods, and that they take care of our Concerns.* || *There is no Nation so wild*, as Cicero affirms, *nor any Man so inhuman, but he is persuaded of the Existence of the Gods: And he makes* * *Velleius* the Epicurean Philosopher say, *That all the World is firmly persuaded of this Truth, and that there are neither Philosophers, nor ignorant People, but are convinc'd of it.* To this purpose I might cite

* De Cælo, l. 3.

† Var. Hist. l. 11. c. 3.

|| Tuscul. l. 1.

* De Nat. Deor. l. 1.

cite

cite many Authorities of ancient Writers, and the Testimonies of an infinite Number of People, who have publish'd Relations of their Voyages. But in stead of multiplying a great Number of Citations to confirm this Matter, of Fact, I think it will be more useful to answer Two Objections that may be made against it.

And, First, perhaps it may be said, that we are to place among the Number of Atheists, all the Philosophers that were *Materialists*, such as *Anaximander*, *Leucippus*, *Democritus*, *Strato of Lampascus*, and their Followers, who believed that the World and all Things it contains, were produc'd and dispos'd in the Order wherein we now see it, by the Qualities of Matter only, or by pure Chance, and that no Deity or Intelligence had any thing to do in the Formation of so many beautiful Works, nor did take any Care of Governing them. Such an Opinion, will some say, being inconsistent with the Belief of the Existence of a God, 'tis plain that they who profess'd it were truly Atheists.

I confess that in Strictness this Conclusion may be drawn from such a Principle, since none can reasonably acknowledge a God, and have a just *Idea* of him, but he must be oblig'd at the same Time to acknowledge that he created the Universe, and preserves and governs it by his Providence. But then it must be granted on the other Hand, that many People,

ple, and even those that are most Learned, do neither reason nor act always very consequently; of which Truth I could produce a great many Instances if it were necessary. This being so, I think we ought not to ascribe to any Man the Consequence, which may be deduc'd from his Opinion, when he himself rejects that Consequence; and that therefore it is unjust to accuse the Philosophers of Atheism, since in spite of their impious Principles, they profess'd to believe the Existence of a God. To say, as *Possidonius* the *Stoick* does, that *Epicurus* would not have publicly declar'd, that there are Immortal Gods, but only to shun the publick Hatred; This is not to prove, that the Thing was really so in Fact. If the Philosophers that were *Materialists*, were insensible of the Evidences of a Deity, which clearly appear in all Parts of the World, and being prejudic'd by their own Opinions, did not duly consider them: Yet they might be better inform'd by the natural Light and Conviction of their Conscience, which might force them to acknowledge this prime Truth. Neither is this a mere groundless Conjecture; for *Velleius* the Epicurean, whom *Cicero* introduces in his Treatise of the Nature of the Gods, *positively affirms what I have said. The Passage is *L. 1. very considerable, and is very well worthy of our Observation. This *Velleius* maintains, that *Epicurus* was the only

* He was in the wrong to affirm that he was the only Person. This was said only to do him Honour.

NB.

* only Person that perceiv'd there are Gods, for this Reason, because Nature has engraven the Idea of them in the Minds of all Men, it being impossible, continues he, that an Opinion which was neither established by Precepts, nor by Custom, nor by Laws, but is born with all Mankind, should not be true. Since this Place is a little difficult to translate, and the Reader will be glad to see the Original, * I have chosen rather to add it whole and entire in the Margin, than to weaken the Force of it

* Solus (*Epicurus*) enim vidit primum esse Deos, quod in omnium animis eorum notionem impressisset ipsa Natura. Quæ est enim gens, aut quod genus hominum, quod non habeat sine Doctrina anticipationem quandam Deorum, quam appellat *πρόληψιν* *Epicurus*, i. e. anteceptam animo quandam informationem, sine qua, nec intelligi quidquam, nec quæri, nec disputari possit? Cujus Rationis vim atque utilitatem, ex illo cælesti *Epicuri* de regula & Judicio volumine, accepimas. Quod igitur Fundamentum hujus quæstionis est, id præclare factum videtis. Cum enim non instituto aliquo, aut more, aut lege, sit opinio constituta, maneatq; ad unum omnium firma consensio, intelligi necesse est esse Deos, quoniam infinitas eorum, vel potius innatas cogitationes habemus. De quo autem omnium natura consentit, id verum esse necesse est. Esse igitur Deos confitendum est. Quod quoniam fere constat inter omnes, non Philosophos solum, sed etiam indoctos, fateamur constare illud etiam, hanc nos habere sive anticipationem, ut ante dixi, sive prænotionem Deorum. Sunt enim novis rebus nova ponenda Nomina, ut *Epicurus* ipse *πρόληψιν* appellabit, quam antea nemo eo verbo nominaverat. *Cic. de Nat. Deor. L. 1.*

it by my Version. What * *Cicero* brings in *Cotta* the Platonist saying in the following part of the same Book, *That he never saw any Man, who so much fear'd Death and the Gods as Epicurus did,* is an Evidence, that this Philosopher was persuaded of their Existence, by an internal Sensation, as *Velleius* affirms. And after this can any one maintain, that all the Philosophers, who were *Materialists* were really Atheists? On the contrary is it not much more equitable, to accuse them of having false and confus'd Idea's of the Deity, which engag'd them in a bad Way of Reasoning, as appears by their ridiculous Opinions.

* *Nec quenquam vidi qui magis timeret ea, quæ timenda esse negaret, mortem dico & Deos.*

The Second Difficulty which is urg'd against the Universal Belief of the Existence of God, is this, That there are found some whole Nations, who do not discover any Knowledge of a Deity, nor any Sence of Religion. To which I answer, First, That the Travellers who have accus'd some People of Atheism, have been contradicted by others who seem to have enquir'd better into that Matter. This is what many learned Men have made appear: As for Instance, What has been related, of the *Cassers* to this purpose by some, has been denied by other Writers, and especially by *Dapper*, who ought in this to be credited, as much as any other Man. He maintains that these Barbarians

2d. Object.

barians acknowledge a Supreme Being, whom they call *Humma*; to whom indeed they scarce pay any Worship, except when he sends them a good Season, or when they complain of a bad one. But tho' it were true, that some wretched Savages did not shew, that they had any Notion of a Deity, as there are some People extremely brutish and Ignorant, who have extinguish'd all the Remains of Natural Light, and who have scarce any thing left to denominate them reasonable Creatures but their Shape; yet such ought not to be admitted among those whose Voices are to be reckon'd. And indeed the Objection taken from this kind of Beasts, does great honour to the Atheists, and their Stupidity doubtless would be of great weight for promoting Atheism.

2d. *Answer.*

But supposing after all this, That in all Ages some Persons should be found, who were really in so gross an Error, no other Consequence can be deduced from it but this, That as a small number of Monsters make no Exception to the general Laws of Nature; so likewise the prodigious Extravagance of some Fools, whose Interest it is that there should be no God, ought not in Reason to hinder the contrary Belief from passing for Universal. But now let us see what gave Occasion to this Belief, and how from thence we may justly infer the Truth of our Assertion.

'Tis

'Tis certain that this Belief must proceed from one of these Two Causes, either from the Invention of Men, or the perfect Evidence of the Truth itself. As to the first, if we carefully consider, that we are naturally Blind, Uncertain, Inconstant, Corrupt, Proud and Lovers of Independence, That Opinions and Customs have always been so different, that their most Universal Property has been their Diversity, as *Montaigne* does very well observe, *Essays*, B. 2. c. 37. at the End; If I say, we carefully consider all this, we shall be convinc'd, that it is altogether impossible, that People of all Ages, of all Climates, should Unanimously agree, in acknowledging a Supreme Invisible Being, and look upon him as their Sovereign and absolute Lord, make their Prayers, Vows, Offerings and Sacrifices to him, if they had no other Proofs of his Existence, but the bare Affirmation of some People, who were such Fools as to imagine, that Men ought to do Reverence to their own Chimera, and blindly burn Incense to an Idol of their own Invention. I pray those who are not fully convinc'd of the Solidity of this Proof, to reflect with great Care and Application, upon the Force of this Argument.

*The Original
of the Univer-
sal consent of
Mankind in
the Belief of a
God.*

To add yet greater Strength to it, I must in a few Words refute what the Atheists say, concerning the Original of this Universal Belief. They maintain,
That

That it arose, first, from the Fear which Men commonly have of things Future ; secondly, From the Ignorance of Natural Causes ; thirdly, From the Policy and artifice of Princes and the first Law-givers. To this I answer in general, that since this Objection is not founded upon any positive Proof, it ought to be look'd upon as a mere groundless Conjecture : For it is not sufficient to affirm boldly, that the Belief of a God owes its Birth to these Three Principles, but they must make it appear by good Reasons, that the Thing is really so, which they can never do. It is therefore altogether ridiculous, to pretend to call in question by such-like Suppositions, a Doctrine which is as well-grounded as can reasonably be desired. More particularly, as to what the Atheists say, That it was Men's natural Timorousness which inspired them all with a Belief, that there is an invisible Being, who governs the World and punishes whom he pleases ; I answer, That it is altogether absurd to attribute the Original of this Belief to that which on the contrary is the common Cause of Atheism. And for Proof of this I appeal to the Conscience of the Atheists : Let them tell us sincerely, whether it is not the Apprehension of the Judgments of God, that obliges them to believe that there is none, that so they may without any Remorse indulge their darling Lusts, which they cannot forsake. Now if all Men have an Inclination to commit those Things
which

which their Conscience condemns, Is it not much more natural and reasonable, to endeavour as the Atheists do, to satisfy themselves, that there is nothing to be fear'd upon this account, that so they may freely and without scruple give a Loose to their Inclinations, than to invent a Being whose Idea causes perpetual Frights and Alarms? I add in the Second Place, That all Men must be utterly void of Common Sense, to imagine by a foolish and groundless Fear, that there is an Invisible Being, when the Belief of it serves only to restrain that Love which they all naturally have for Liberty and Independence.

As to the Ignorance of the Causes of the Events which happen in the Universe, the Ignorance, which, according to the Atheists, induces Men to have recourse to an Almighty God, for explaining the Effects which they cannot comprehend; I say, That if it is the Original of the Universal Belief of a Supreme Being, then no People should be more fully persuaded of it's Existence than those who are most Ignorant: And yet these are the People concerning whom they object to us, That they have not any Notion of a Deity. I say in the Second Place, That if the Atheists think they have good Grounds for their Opinion by pretending, that they are able to give an account of all Things by Matter

As to the Ignorance of Natural Causes.

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and

and Motion, without being oblig'd to have recourse to an Intelligent Being, spiritual and infinite, they are in this respect wonderfully blind and prejudic'd. Can they conceive, for instance, that a Being so imperfect as Matter, is eternal, infinite and self-subsistent? That this Matter moves itself, and consequently that Motion is essential to it? That without any Knowledge it fram'd so great a Number of beautiful Bodies in which infinite Marks of Wisdom do clearly appear? That it is capable of all the Modifications of our Soul, &c? I say moreover, That they are so far from being able to give a clear Account of all this, without ascending in the Scale of Causes to

† See the
Preface about
the 6th Cause
of Infidelity.

an Immaterial and most perfect Being † that they are not able to explain even the smallest Things. Let any one read and examine, what has been written of Nature, by the most able Philosophers ancient and modern, and he will plainly perceive, that their Systems are full of unanswerable Difficulties, and that their Accounts do almost everywhere fall short. Lastly, I answer, That the Ignorance of Causes, has no wise given occasion to the Universal Belief of a Deity; but on the contrary, That by the evident Knowledge of the Properties of Matter, Men being prepossess'd with a lively Sense of the Natural Power of Conscience, were convinc'd of the Existence of this most perfect Being:

ing: for perceiving plainly, that Matter could not be Eternal, that it had not in itself any Principle of Motion, that being devoid of all Knowledge, it was not capable of ranging itself in that wonderful Order in which it now is, nor of producing the Operations of our Soul, &c. They did from hence reasonably conclude, that there must of Necessity be an Intelligent Being, distinct from Matter, who by his Almighty Power produc'd all Things.

As to the Third Cause which the Atheists alledge to be the Original of the Universal Belief of a Deity, viz. the Policy of Princes, and the Cunning of Lawgivers, whom they pretend to have wisely invented this Invisible Being, that they might the better retain the People, within the Bounds which they prescribe to them; I say First, that it may be clearly prov'd, as has been done by some learned Men, that the Nations were persuaded of the Existence of a God, before the Foundation of Empires, and the Establishment of Laws. I add to this, That it is altogether incredible and plainly absurd, First, That Persons of good Sense should think fit to Invent a Supreme Being which is invisible, the better to retain the People in their Duty; Secondly, That they should pretend to establish firmly the Belief of this Invisible Being upon their own bare affirmation; Thirdly, That

*Of the Policy
of Princes and
Lawgivers.*

this Fiction should spread universally in the Minds of all Men; and Fourthly, that the Philosophers themselves should not only give Credit to such a Vision, but should also maintain it by very solid Arguments. Was it not much more natural and reasonable, to enact good Laws with severe Penalties, which would be much fitter to restrain Men's Vices, than the Fear of an Imaginary Being?

Since therefore it is undeniable, that all People have acknowledg'd a God; since it is no less certain, that this Belief cannot proceed from the Invention of Men, as I have shewn, we must necessarily conclude, that the only Cause is, the full and clear Evidence of the Thing itself. For since there are none but the First Principles, such Truths as are perfectly clear and distinct, which have been generally receiv'd by all Men, it is altogether inconceivable that the belief of an Invisible Being, the *Idea* whereof is so contrary to our Lusts, and chiefly to the Love we have for Liberty and Independency, should have been so universal, if it had not been founded upon Proofs so clear and so solid, that no Man can reasonably doubt of it.

Objection.

But some perhaps will say, Are not some Opinions false, which have been generally receiv'd by all People? For instance, did not almost all the World believe many Gods, that the Sun mov'd about the Earth, and that the

the Colours are in the Objects, such as they appear to us? Yet this Plurality of Gods is very absurd, and all the best Philosophers now believe, that the Earth moves round about the Sun, and that Colours are nothing else but the various Reflections of the Rays of Light, which are differently modify'd by the Configuration of the superficial Parts of Objects; and by this Means produce in the Soul, the Sensation of the different Colours we see.

To this I answer, First, *Answer.*
That 'tis false, that all Men have formerly believed a Plurality of Gods. The Jewish Religion, which is more ancient than all the rest, positively taught the contrary, and many Learned Men have prov'd, that the wiser Heathens believed but one Supreme God, and lookt upon the rest only as inferior Spirits, who were his Ministers. As to the Motion of the Earth about the Sun, supposing that the Thing be certain, 'tis very well known, that many of the Ancient Philosophers, as * *Aristarchus of Samos*, || *Philolaus of Crotona*, were of this Opinion, and that *Copernicus* did nothing but restore and rectify this System. But as to this, and the Objection taken from Colours, I add, That there is a great deal of Difference between an Opinion taken up without Examination up-

* *Plutarch of the Opinions of Philosophers*, l. 2. c. 24.

|| *Ibid.* l. 3. c. 13.

on the Testimony of Sense, and that to which we are determin'd by evident Proofs supported by the Testimony of our Conscience. The Sun appears to move about the Earth, the Colours appear to be in the Objects: These deceitful Appearances are thought, by those who have not Search'd deeply into these *Phænomena*, sufficient ground to affirm, that they are really such as they believe that they see them. But the Case is quite otherwise, as to the Existence of a God, who being an Invisible and Impalpable Being, who is an Enemy to that excessive Love we naturally have for Libertinism, the Belief of him cannot enter into the Mind after the same manner, but must be founded upon convincing Reasons, which I come now to examine.

The First which may be alledg'd as the Cause of this Universal Belief, is a constant Tradition, which must necessarily be deriv'd from the first Man, who was the Father of all Mankind, and who being immediately created by the Hand of God, did frequently inculcate into his Posterity the firm Persuasion of a Supreme Being. But since this Tradition, I think, was not sufficient to preserve People of all Times, of all Climates, and of a prodigious Diversity of Tempers, Humours and Customs, in the Belief of a Truth, which is so opposite to their most violent Passions; It could not be generally embrac'd, unless it were confirm'd by the strongest and most sensible Proofs, and
such

such as were most suited to convince equally all those who could make any Use of their Reason: And such are the Demonstrations which I have offer'd, and particularly that which is taken from the admirable Arrangement of the several Parts of the Universe. But since Experience shews us, that there are some People, who never reflect upon the External Proofs of a Deity, nor are ever affected by them tho' they be never so clear, I cannot think, that this sort of Proofs should have prevail'd so powerfully over all sorts of Men, unless they had been prepar'd for Conviction by some Natural Impression. And therefore it seems plain to me, that God, whose Goodness and Wisdom are Infinite, has engraven upon our Soul, which is his own Image, some evident Characters of his Existence; and that when he fram'd it, he enlighten'd it with some bright Rays of his own Majesty, to the end, that by their Light the Conscience of every one might know that infinite Being which created the Soul in Man. This is a sensible Truth which every Man must perceive. *Cicero*, one of the greatest Wits, and the most Judicious among all the ancient Pagans, tells us in the Beginning of his Treatise of the Nature of the Gods, That Nature itself induces us to acknowledge them. *Jamblichus*, a great Philosopher, affirms in his First Chapter of the Book of Mysteries, That the Notion of the Gods is naturally imprinted within us, before we have any Use of our Reason. *Epicurus* himself,

as impious as he was, expresses himself as clearly as is possible, by the Report of *Velleius*, as I have already observ'd. What can I say more? Even the most foolish of all Mankind, the Atheists themselves, who do so obstinately resist the Evidence of external Proofs, yet are forc'd to yield sooner or later to the Testimony of their own Conscience, whose frightful Remorse triumphs invincibly over their Incredulity, and proves most convincingly, that those who will not see God in all the Objects that are round about them, must yet feel him in their own Breast after a terrible Manner.

I have enlarg'd upon this Article a little more than I would have done, if a famous Author had not attack'd the Truth here asserted a little while ago, in the *First Tome of the Continuation of divers Thoughts upon the Occasion of Comets*. The Subject deserves, that I should have insisted yet longer upon it; but the Brevity which I design will not permit me. In the mean time I flatter myself, that I have not omitted any thing which may contribute to set this Matter in its due Light, so as to leave no doubt in those who will carefully consider what has been said.

The seventh P R O O F.

*Taken from the Truth of the Holy
Scripture.*

IF the Holy Scriptures are true, from thence it will necessarily follow, that there is a God: And that they are so, I hope clearly to demonstrate, when the Method of my Discourse brings me to that Article.

These are some part of the Reasons which prove undeniably the Existence of a Deity. If any wretched Atheists are not fully convinc'd by them, it would be in vain to propose others to persuade them. As to my own Part, I profess very sincerely, that I know not any Truth which is better prov'd, nor to which the Mind of Man does more irresistibly give its Assent.

C H A P. II.

Of Providence.

TIS wonderful to find such great Numbers of unhappy People who profess to believe a God, and yet dare deny a Providence, as if this latter Truth were

were not a * necessary Consequence from the former. If the *Epicurean* Deists would but allow themselves to think a little seriously, they would clearly perceive, that the same Proofs which demonstrate that there is a God, do equally demonstrate that he governs the World and all Things in it.

He that asserts a Being most perfect, does not he also assert a Being on whom all the Creatures depend? And this being granted, is it not evident, that those Creatures which depend upon this Sovereign Power, for their Life, Motion, and Being, cannot conserve these Things by their own Power, since to do this, they must be Independent, which is a contradiction.

Let the Libertines tell us, upon what Grounds they imagine, that God does not take any care of the Universe, nor of all Things in it. Is it because this vast Machine is of too great extent? But God is Infinite. Is it because he would have too much business to mind? But God is Almighty, and by his mere Will can do what he pleases. Is it because so many Affairs would disturb his repose? But he is Immutable. Is it because he sees not our

* Dico igitur Providentia Deorum mundum & omnes mundi partes, & initio constitutas esse, & omni Tempore administrari; eamq; disputationem tres in partes nostri fere dividunt: Quarum pars prima est quæ ducitur ab ea ratione quæ docet esse Deos, quo concessio confitendum est eorum consilio mundum administrari. *Cic. de Nat. Deor. L. 2.*

our Actions, hears not our Discourses, and cannot discover our Thoughts? But it is he that fram'd the wonderful Structure of the Eye and Ear, and who searcheth the Reins and Heart. Is it because he loves not his own Works? But he is infinitely good, and if he had the goodness to create them, surely he will concern himself in the Government of them. Is it lastly, because he regards neither Vice nor Vertue? But he is Justice and Holiness itself. And therefore to deny a Providence is to offer the greatest Indignity and Affront to God, it is to deny his Attributes; It is to advance the Creatures into his Place, to maintain that they can subsist without his Support, that he does not trouble himself about them, that he form'd them only to abandon them presently to themselves, *i. e.* to blind Chance. In truth it requires no great Sharpness of Wit to perceive that Men turn *Epicureans*, only to banish from their Heart all that Fear which the Belief of a Providence must necessarily produce in Debauchees, who are resolv'd to persist in their Lewdness and Excess. Because the Belief of a Deity (provided he be Idle and unactive) is attended with no frightful Consequence, they make no Scruple of believing it with all the rest of Mankind; But that God governs and takes notice of all Things, and that he will one Day render to every one according to his Works, this is a Doctrine that is inconsistent with a wilful continuance in sin, how necessary soever

soever the Connexion of this Truth be with that which they acknowledge, and whatsoever Contradiction there is between such opposite Sentiments.

But more particularly, let us consider a little Four or Five Demonstrations, which will place this important Doctrine in a clear Light.

The First P R O O F,

Taken from the Impossibility, that Matter should continue of itself to move.

IF Matter has not in itself any Principle of Activity, as I have prov'd in the precedeing Chapter with the clearest Evidence, I think 'tis no less evident, That if an immaterial, infinite, almighty Being, who First mov'd it by his Will, should suspend the efficacious Act of his Will, then all the Motion of the Universe must necessarily cease from the Moment of that Suspension. For since to give Motion is an Action, and every Action must proceed from some Cause, how can Matter which has not this Cause in itself, continue to move itself, after the Supreme Being who alone can give it Motion, has put a Stop to his moving Virtue. This being plainly impossible, we must of necessity conclude, that God moves immediately all Bodies, and consequently that he governs all by his wise Providence.

But

But those who have no sound Judgment of Things will be *objection.* apt to say, Do we not see that Bodies communicate Motion to one another, and ought not we to believe our Eyes? I answer, It is not at all true, that they see what they *Answer.* pretend to see in this Case, for the Opinion they have of that imaginary Communication, is only a Prejudice which Right Reason clearly dissipates. All that we perceive distinctly on this occasion, is, That one Body which is at rest, meeting with another Body which is in Motion, does then begin to move in a Degree proportionable to what the moving Body loses of its Motion. Now since we are by Reason perfectly convinc'd, that God alone is the only Cause of the Motion of all Bodies, we ought to think, that when one of those which move, meets another which was at rest, the Almighty Mover, according to the General Laws he has establish'd, takes from the First as many Degrees of Motion, as he gives to the Second. For, this being certain, that no Body has in itself a moving Vertue, how can it communicate Motion to another? Would not this be to give what it has not at all, which is impossible?

To confirm this Truth we need only consider, That Motion is an Accident, which cannot be deny'd, and consequently it is incommunicable to another; since it is the Nature of an Accident, that it cannot

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cannot pass out of one Subject into another. And the Reason why it cannot, (this I say only *en passant*, in condescension to those who understand not Philosophy) is, because an Accident being only the *Mode* of a Substance, or the Manner of it's Existing, does not at all differ from the Subject which it modifies. As for instance, the square Figure of a Body, being an Accident or Mode of that Body, cannot possibly pass into another, because this Figure is nothing else but the Square Body itself, which cannot penetrate another Body; No more can Motion, which being a mere Accident of a Body is nothing but the Body as moving, be ever parted from it, to pass into another Subject.

Objection. A Second Error which those fall into, who are not used to reason from clear *Idea's*, is this, That they believe our Soul to be the true Cause of the Motion of our Body. Do not we feel, say they, by Experience, that it is our Will, which makes, when it pleases, all the Parts of our Body to move, provided they are capable of executing their Functions by obeying its Orders? I answer, That all we

Answer. observe in this Matter, is, That our Body moves at our Will, but this does by no Means prove, That it gives the Motion: On the contrary, if we consult our Reason, we may plainly observe, that 'tis impossible it should

should be so. For if our Soul is Immaterial, as I shall clearly demonstrate hereafter, it is plain that it cannot act upon Matter at all, unless it be Almighty, which is a Property that every one knows it is infinitely distant from. And therefore it must necessarily be acknowledged, that it is God, who according to the Laws he has establish'd for the Union of Soul and Body, immediately moves the Members of the Body according to the Will of the Soul. But from thence it cannot be inferr'd, that this Universal Cause is the Author of Sin; since it is apparent, that Sin does not consist in such an Action as the Motion of the Body, which has nothing but what is good in it, but in the Determination of the Will which makes a bad Use of its Liberty.

It is further objected, That if God is the immediate Cause of the Motion of the Body, He must be also the Cause of the Motions of the Soul, *i. e.* of its Thoughts, and of the Actions of the Will itself, which appears to us to be as it were the *Primum Mobile* of it; for 'tis unconceivable say they, that a Created Being, as the Soul is, can modify itself, and act freely by its own peculiar Power, any more than Matter can do. And if it cannot, 'tis plain that we have no Liberty, and that hence it will follow, that God is the Author of Sin, and that it would be unjust in him to punish it.

To

To this Difficulty I answer, That it cannot be justly inferr'd that God is the immediate Author of all our Thoughts, because he is the Cause of all the Motions of Matter; For we know much better the Nature of Matter than of the Soul. We see plainly that extended Substances cannot move themselves, and continue their Motion, when the moving Cause ceases: But as to the Soul, since all that we can clearly conceive of it, is, that it is Immaterial, and that it thinks, this negative Notion of the Principle of our Thoughts, does not discover to us all that it is capable of: And since our own Experience does undeniably convince us that it acts of itself, we have not the least Reason to doubt of it. And this being so, we ought to be fully persuaded, that God whose Power is Infinite, can make Intelligent Creatures which are endow'd with the Power of acting freely, by his Permission, and under the Direction of his Providence.

The Second P R O O F,

Taken from the Beautiful Order of the Universe, The Regularity of the Motions we observe in it, And the Wonderful Production of organized Bodies.

SUPPOSE it were possible, that Matter should continue of itself, in that Motion which was given it at first, and that
God

God had wholly abandon'd it to Chance, without concerning himself any wise in directing its Motion, would it be conceivable, that the different Parts of the Universe should be continued constantly in that beautiful Order wherein we now see them; That these Planets, these bright Globes of Fire which rowl about our Heads, should have been capable, without the Assistance of a Supreme Intelligence, to keep the same Station, and continue their Courses in an exact Regularity for so many Ages, without wasting and wandring from their Tract? And above all, can it be imagin'd that senseless Matter should have the Wit and Cunning, that is necessary to produce of a small Seed, Plants, Trees of so many Kinds, and Bodies consisting of so many different Parts? That without any Knowledge it should have the Art of forming of certain Corpuscles almost Homogeneous, such Machines as have a Thousand different Organs, and which are almost always found alike in Animals of the same Kind? Here the most subtil Philosophy is at a loss, the brightest Reason is benighted, and the most Obstinate are forc'd to acknowledge *the Finger of God*, which is so apparently the Cause of so many wonderful Works, and who consequently governs all things by his wise Providence. I will not urge this Argument further, because I insisted sufficiently upon it in the first Chapter, speaking about the Order of the Parts of the Universe.

The Third P R O O F,

Taken from the Impossibility, That the Actions of Animals, which are commonly attributed to Instinct, should proceed from their own Contrivance.

WE see some Animals do certain Actions, wherein there appears such a wonderful Contrivance, that it is plainly impossible, they themselves should be the Cause of them; and therefore we must of Necessity acknowledge, that it is God who produces these Actions immediately in them. This is a Truth so manifest, that all who are in their right Wits must grant it, if they will but reflect a little upon the Matter.

Not to enter upon a long Account of Particulars; I shall only enquire into what a Bird does for the Propagation of its Kind. I suppose that Two Goldfinches, for Instance, have never had Young-ones, and that they happen to couple for having some, their first Care after their Coupling, is to build on a Tree proper for their purpose, a convenient Nest, which they know how to build the first Time with as much Art and Regularity, as if they had made one a Hundred Times. To fasten it the better, they begin with twisting Three or Four Branches which are plac'd around, with some Fibres of Plants, which they cover with Moss on the outside to defend it against Rain, and
garnish

garnish within with Hay and Hair, and a Kind of Cotton, very fine and very warm, of which they make their Bed. This little House so well-contriv'd, being finish'd, the Female lays its Eggs in it, which it keeps warm by blowing up its Feathers, and spreading a little its Wings, the better to cover them. If Hunger obliges her to go out, she will not do it, until the Male be ready to take her Place, for fear lest the Eggs growing cold should become addle, and produce nothing. When the Young ones are come out of their Eggs, and in a Condition to take Food, the Male and Female are continually busied in bringing them certain Worms, which they never eat themselves, and they know very well, how to divide them equally, so that each of them shall have a sufficient Quantity. On the other side, the Young ones do not fail to open their Bill, out of a Desire to receive their Food; and when they have need to discharge their Excrements, they always take Care to turn their Backside out of their Nest, lest they should defile it. Whenever they grow big, and are strong enough to fly, they betake themselves to the open Air, and having learn'd to eat alone, they quit their Governors, and go in Search of their Food by themselves. I would entreat the *Libertines*, to give me a good Account of the wonderful Actions of these little Animals. Who told the Male and Female that they had need of a Nest? Who taught them at first to make one

with so much Art, and exactly after the same Manner as all of their kind build one? Who declared to them that the Female had Eggs in her Body, and that she would quickly lay them, and that it would be necessary for her and the Male, to cover them alternatively with all possible Care, and that after a certain Time these Eggs would bring forth Young ones? Who inform'd them that they should not feed their Young with Seeds, upon which they live after they are grown big; but that they should choose out for them such Insects as were most easy of Digestion, and most agreeable to the Niceness of their Stomach? Who taught these Young ones to open their Bill, almost as soon as they come out of the Shell, to take their Food, and to keep their Bed so clean? I have no Design to enquire here, whether Beasts have any Reason or no: But I assert, that tho' they had Reason, incomparably more than a Man, it would be impossible, they should do of themselves such wonderful Things, without having any Instruction. For where is the Artificer who is so ingenious, as to make at the first Essay, without any teaching, a House so well-contriv'd and of so regular a Symmetry, as if he were the most skilful Architect? Is there any old Man, who has had never so much Experience in the Affairs of the World, that is so wise as to foresee an Event which was altogether unknown to him, and whereof he could not have the least Suspicion? These

These are Prodigies above the Capacity of a Man, and of which he is naturally altogether incapable. Now if the greatest Wits have not so much Ingenuity and Capacity, as to invent and make at the first Essay, without Study and without Learning, any Building, in which there is Proportionably as much Contrivance and Art as in a Bird's Nest; and if it be plainly impossible, that any finite Understanding, of whatsoever Order of intelligent Beings it be, should penetrate into such Future Things as are wholly concealed from it; Is it credible, that Beasts should partake of so excellent Prerogatives, and that the wonderful Things which we admire most in them, should be the Effects of their Reason and Knowledge? If this be so, how can the surprising Things which they do, be reconcil'd to their other Actions, in which they appear to be altogether Brutes? How comes it that they are so much superior to Man, only in what concerns their Preservation and the Propagation of their kind, and so much inferior in all other Things? Is it conceivable that a Knowledge so exceeding great, can be consistent with extreme Blindness and Ignorance? These Things are so contradictory, that it plainly appears to be impossible for these Animals to do those Things by their own Knowledge, which require such a high Degree of Reason, and therefore it must needs be acknowledged, that they are the Effects of an

external Cause, which can be no other than Providence, which produces in them immediately those Motions, so regular, so uniform, so worthy of Admiration.

Instinct of Animals. Some ignorant People doubtless will not fail to object, That the Beasts act in these Things wherein there appears so much Wisdom by a certain *Instinct* which inspires and guides them. But let these Persons explain themselves: What do they Understand by this Word *Instinct*? All the World makes Use of it, and there is scarce one Man that has any *Idea* of it. Is it the Motion of a blind Nature devoid of any Knowledge? But these Actions we now treat of, have too eminent Marks of Wisdom, to be the Effects of a blind Cause. Is it a supereminent Reason which these Beasts are endow'd with above all intelligent Creatures? But I do not think that any Person will be so extravagant, as to imagine that they have so great a Privilege. What I have already said, proves so plainly the Absurdity of such a Thought, that I need not insist any more upon it. What then at last is this *Instinct of Beasts*, which directs them with so much Exactness, and so much Foresight? For certain the more any one thinks of it, the more he will be convinc'd, that it can be nothing else, but the Regular Motion of Providence communicated to them

them, according to the inviolable Order of the Laws which God has established from the Beginning of the World.

Since there are some People *2d. Objection.* who, to distinguish themselves from the Vulgar, have affirm'd, among their other extraordinary Opinions, That Beasts have a certain Language peculiar to themselves, which they make use of to communicate their Thoughts, there may perhaps be some found so extravagant, as to maintain, that the Actions which we admire most in them, were taught them by their Fathers and Mothers, and that in all this, they do no more but follow the Directions, which are given them from Father to Son. This ridiculous Opinion has been so fully confuted by what I have said, that I need not insist longer here to show the Impertinence of it. I shall therefore give them no other

Answer but this: I pray those *Answer.* who are so simple, as to have any Doubt about this Matter, to take some young Birds two or three Days after they are hatch'd, and bring them up by Hand until they can eat alone, and then put them afterwards in a great Aviary, where there are some young Trees, and every thing that is necessary for making their Nests and feeding their Young, and they will then see, as did some Persons who made the Experiment, that these Animals will proceed exactly after the same manner, as they would have done if

they had been left to grow up in their Nest, and to receive their pretended Lessons from their Masters.

'Tis therefore absolutely impossible, to explain the Skill and Foresight, not only of the Birds, but also of the Spiders, of the Ants, the Silk-worms, the Bees, and many other kinds of Brute-Animals, but by attributing them to Providence, which is apparently and necessarily the only Cause of them. Now if it humbles itself so far, as to take care of these Animals, is there not much more reason to believe, as Jesus Christ argues, that it will concern itself in
Mat. 6. 26. what relates to Man, who is much more excellent than they?

The Fourth P R O O F,

Taken from the Immateriality of the Soul.

IF our Soul is Immaterial, as I shall endeavour to prove in the following Chapter, 'tis plain that it cannot be produc'd by the Bodies of our Fathers and Mothers; and 'tis no less plain that it cannot be produc'd by their Soul, because then it would be Divisible, which is perfectly contrary to its Immateriality: And therefore, since it is impossible that any Thing should give Being to itself, It must necessarily be God who form'd it, and
united

united it to our Body, when it was capable of receiving it; From whence it follows, That there is a Providence, which concerns itself in the Affairs of this World.

The Fifth P R O O F,

Taken from the Truth of the Holy Scripture.

IF the Prophecies, Miracles, and an infinite Number of Events which are related in the Holy Scripture, are true, Then it is unquestionable, that there is a Providence which governs all the Creatures: But I hope to demonstrate clearly, That the Scripture is worthy of Credit, from whence it will by good Consequence follow, that God governs all Things by his infinite Wisdom.

I might use many other solid Reasons to confirm this Truth if it were necessary: And chiefly I might Relate an infinite Number of Circumstances of human Affairs, in the Management whereof, Providence does sometimes make itself sensible even * to

the most impious, in spite of their Obdurateness. We see in all Histories, Revolutions and Exploits, so surprizing and so unexpected;

* Usq; adeo res humanas vis abdita quædam
Obterit, & pulchros
fasces, sævasq; secures
Proculcare, ac ludibrio sibi habere videtur.
Lucret. l. 5. ver. 1232,
&c.

the

The ablest Politicians, have been from Time to Time guilty of such gross Mistakes, The most secret Crimes have often been so strangely discovered, Our Life has been expos'd to so many Dangers in all Appearance unavoidable, from which it has been deliver'd by some Means unforeseen: That we cannot but perceive on all these Occasions, the visible Tokens of the Power, Justice and Goodness of him who holds all the Creatures in his own Hand. But since the *Libertines* scarce ever reflect upon any of these Events, and choose to attribute them to good or bad Fortune, which according to them disposes of all Things, altho' it be in Effect, nothing but a mere *Chimera*, I shall rest satisfy'd with the Demonstrations I have propos'd, and which cannot be refus'd without Offering the greatest Violence to the clearest Principles of Reason.

C H A P. III.

Of the Immortality of the Soul.

WHATsoever Errors the Mind of Man is capable of, I can hardly conceive, that any People are so far blinded, as to be fully persuaded, that their Soul dies with their Body. For how can any Man heartily believe, That the Soul, which

which is the Cause of so many ingenious Thoughts, of so many abstracted *Idea's*, of so many admirable Inventions, of so many vast Designs; which recalls things Past, and foresees things Future, and so in a Manner gives Being to Things that are not; which raises itself up to the Heavens to measure them, and descends into the Abyss to sound the Depth of it; which is never content with the Pleasures it enjoys, and is always incapable of being satisfy'd with earthly Delights, but is continually aspiring after a Happiness more perfect; which tho' it be chain'd to a weak, languishing and perishing Body, is yet so greedy of Immortality, and has such a lively Sense of it; Can any Man believe, I say, that this Soul is nothing but a little Dust and Dirt, which differs in nothing Essentially from the Soul of a Dog? If there be any so mad as to have such an absurd Thought, they must have a very mean Soul, and if I had not evident Proofs that it is of the same Nature with that of other Men, I should be inclinable to think, that it is really nothing but a Mixture of Clay and Spit-tle, such as they would gladly have it to be, that so after Death they may be free from the Punishment they deserve. But I intend now to prove demonstratively, that, unhappily for them, this principal Part of themselves is Immortal, and that it shall be eternally the Object of divine Vengeance, unless they seriously repent, before they appear before the terrible Tribunal of God. The

The First P R O O F,

*Taken from the Immateriality of
the Soul.*

THERE is no Truth appears more evident and sensible to all thinking Men, than the Immateriality of the Soul: And for Proof of it, Thus I argue.

Those Substances, whose Essential Properties are different, cannot be of the same Nature; but the Essential Properties of the Soul are different from those of Matter, and therefore the Soul cannot be of the same Nature with Matter. There is nothing more evident, than that the Essential Properties of the Soul, are different from those of Matter: It is an Essential Property of the Soul to Think, *i. e.* to Conceive, to Judge, to Will, to Doubt, to Love and Hate, to Fear and Hope, to be Sensible of Pleasure and Pain, &c. The Essential Properties of Matter, are, To be Extended, Divisible, Impenetrable, Solid, and of some Figure. Now what can be imagin'd more different and more inconsistent than these Properties? The more any Man thinks of them, the more he will be convinc'd, that they are altogether incompatible in one and the same Substance. Let any one take a View of Matter with all his Senses, let him examine carefully the Changes of which it is capable, and he will clearly perceive

ceive that it can only be alter'd by being divided, and changing it's Figure, which is an Accident that gives us no *Idea* of Thought. But tho' we did not perceive, as we do with the clearest Evidence, that Matter in all its several Variations, can never suffer any Change but in its Figure *; yet since it

NB.

can never cease to be extended, solid, and to have some Figure, &c. it is plain, That after what Manner soever it be modified, it is not a Thinking Substance, whose Nature appears to us absolutely inconsistent with these Properties. From whence we must necessarily conclude, That the Soul is a Substance altogether different from Matter.

To set this Matter in a clearer Light, and to make the Absurdity of those who believe the Soul Material, the more palpable, I will examine the Matter yet more nicely. I demand therefore, First, of these People, that they would tell me of what Matter their Soul is made? They will answer no doubt, That the Soul consists of certain Spirituous Particles, or very small Corpuscles which are always in Motion. But are not these Corpuscles extended, solid, and figur'd? This cannot be deny'd, since these are Properties inseparable from Matter: And if this be so, does it not plainly appear to be impossible, that these little extended, solid, figur'd

Questions.

1. If the Soul is Material, of what sort of Matter is it compos'd?

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figur'd Substances, *i. e.* these Triangles, Squares, Pentagons, Hexagons, Heptagons, Octogons, Bodies Spherical, Oval, Pyramidal, and of any other Figure whatsoever (for these Substances must needs be of some Figure) should be a Thought, *i. e.* an *Idea*, a Judgment, a Reasoning, an Opinion, a Doubt, Love, Hatred, Pleasure or Pain, &c. Was ever any Imagination more absurd? Let these Corpuscles move after what Manner they please, upward, downward, to the Right, to the Left, fast, or slow, does any one conceive, that they change their Nature by this means? Do they not still continue endow'd with the Properties of Matter? Is it not plain, as I have already observ'd, That all the Change that can happen is only their acquiring another Figure, but not the Properties of the Soul, which can by no means proceed from those of Matter, that never ceases to be a solid Extension?

2. *If the Soul is compos'd of certain Corpuscles, do these Corpuscles think before they are in our Body, or no?*

In the Second Place I ask, Whether the spirituous Parts or Corpuscles, which produce the Operations of the Soul, according to the Opinion of the *Libertines* think in the Food, wherein they are contain'd, before they are chang'd into our Bodies, or whether they do not think? If they do think, there are then in the Bread, in the Wine, in the Water, in the Meat, in the Herbs, &c. Souls which conceive, judge and reason, &c. If they

they do not think, whence comes it to pass, that they acquire in our Brain, and the other Parts of the Body, this wonderful Property, which they had not before? Who can imagine, That the change of Place, or at most of Figure, should communicate to them Judgment, Will, Perception, &c?

I demand in the Third Place, Whether these Particles, which think in us, continue to think after they are exhal'd from our Body? For 'tis certain, and no Body

3. Do the Corpuscles think after they are evaporated, and out of the Body?

questions it, that the spirituous Parts in us are continually evaporating: If they think, then there is one Part of our Soul, that thinks without us, while another Part thinks within. If they think not, why do they lose this Property? Let them give a good Reason for this. Is it not on the contrary very probable, that being then more at large, they should think more freely.

I ask in the Fourth Place, Whether the spirituous Parts, that compose our Thoughts, are separated one from another? They cannot say the contrary, for otherwise if they were united, they would no more be Corpuscles, but a Mass of Matter, which none would acknowledge to be the Principle of our Thoughts: But if they be separated, then it is absolutely necessary that they all think separately. This Consequence is undeniable: And if it

it be so, then in stead of one Soul, we have all some Millions of Souls, which subsisting all distinctly, must be independent one of another. But how then can so many separate and independent Souls agree to think so unanimously, to conceive, to will, to hate, to love, to fear, to hope, to feel, &c. all on a sudden the same thing? How do they all pass in an Instant, from one Modification to another? who commands, who directs them with so much exactness? In truth so great Extravagancies are sufficient to make all those blush, who have Sense enough to observe them.

5. *Do these
Corpuscles
move of them-
selves, or no?*

I demand in the Fifth Place, Whether these Corpuscles of which our Soul is compos'd do move of themselves, or whether their Motion proceeds from some external Cause? The former cannot be maintain'd, for I have already demonstrated, that Matter has not in itself any Principle of Motion: But supposing that these Corpuscles do move of themselves, 'tis altogether inconceivable, that they subsisting distinctly and separately one from another, should agree at one and the same time, to move towards an infinite number of different Places according to the different Thoughts: Neither can it be said, That their Motion is communicated to them from other Bodies. But if any one should affirm this, I ask, Whether these other Bodies have also

also Understanding or not? If they say they have, then Intelligent Beings must of Necessity be multipli'd *in infinitum*: If it be granted that they have not, how can they by a Motion without Knowledge produce a long Chain of Arguments which follow one another with wonderful Exactness? Is it not on the contrary evident, That if our Thoughts were the Effect of a necessary Motion, they would have no Connexion with one another, except it were by Chance, and that in effect they would be no better than what we call idle Vagaries——? It will perhaps be said, that this Motion, altho' produc'd by an external Cause, is manag'd by the Will: But this is plainly impossible, since the Will itself being nothing else, according to this *Hypothesis*, but the Particles of Matter, which must also be mov'd by an External Cause, it can neither act from itself, nor with Freedom.

I might here propose many other Difficulties, which would plainly shew how impossible it is, that our Soul should be material; but what I have said is more than sufficient to demonstrate its Spirituality, and I am sure that whosoever will attentively consider it, will find no Place for doubting. Now if our Soul is immaterial, from hence it follows, that it is nowise subject to the Dissolution of the Parts of our Body, and that naturally it will subsist after our Death. I confess, that he from whom it receiv'd Being, can re-

turn it into nothing from whence it was taken: But since we have no Reason to think that he will do it, and that on the contrary, his Justice, Wisdom and Goodness oblige us to believe, that he designs to preserve its Being after Death, we have all imaginable Reason, to be perfectly convinc'd of its Immortality.

Objection.

After all that I have said, it will perhaps be objected, that we have not any *Idea* of our Soul, and therefore we cannot say, wherein its Essence consists, nor whether it be Corporeal or Spiritual. To this

1st. Answer.

I answer First, That 'tis sufficient to us, that we are fully assur'd by clear Evidence, that Matter is altogether incapable of Thinking, for so we are convinc'd, that the Substance which Thinks in us is not material. Be it so, that we have not any *Idea* of it, and that we know not what its Essence is; but we know certainly that we Think, and that our Thoughts cannot proceed from a Corporeal Principle: And this is sufficient to leave no Room for doubting, that our Soul is Spiritual. I answer in the Second

2d. Answer.

Place, That 'tis true, properly speaking, we cannot know our Soul by *Idea's*, but by inward Sensation, which is the Cause why we cannot well represent it to us by our Imagination, and yet the Knowledge we have of it is very lively and clear; 'tis just like that

that which we have of our Sensations. Nothing is more manifest to the Soul, and yet nothing is more difficult to be imagin'd or express'd, because it knows them only by Sensation. The Reason why the greatest Part of Men cannot form any Notion of the Soul, is because they would represent it under a Corporeal Image, which is directly contrary to its Nature, and consequently altogether impossible. Lastly, I answer as to the Essence of the Soul, That since we observe in this Substance nothing but * Thinking, and that we cannot conceive how it can exist without this Property, we have all Reason to believe, that its Essence consists in this.

3d. Answer.

* All its Operations are comprehended under this word Thinking.

Before I proceed to a Second Proof, I shall offer Two Considerations concerning the Hypothesis of the Materiality of the Soul. The First is, That according to this Principle, It must be acknowledg'd that there are intelligent Souls every-where dispers'd, in Plants, in Minerals, in the Earth, Water, Air and Stars, because these Souls being nothing else but Atoms of a certain Figure and Motion, it would be very unreasonable, to think, that Atoms so modified could be found no-where else but in the Body of Man, or at most in the Bodies of Beasts, and that there was none at all in the other Parts of the Universe.

Those who believe that the Soul is material, ought to believe that there are Souls every-where.

From whence it appears, that no Person has less reason than the *Libertines* to ~~to~~ laugh at all the Relations of the Apparitions of Spirits. How pleasant soever they make themselves, and how incredulous soever they appear to be as to this Matter, the Existence of these Intelligent Beings is a natural Consequence of their Opinion. 'Tis in vain to answer, that they perceive not any thing in Plants, Minerals, &c. which may induce them to suspect that there are Intelligent Beings in them, and that they do not think there are any Spirits, because they never saw any thing of what is reported about them. For who is there that does not clearly conceive, that the Corpuscles of a Soul need not be cloath'd with the shape of an Animal, to make them capable of Thinking, and that 'tis easy for them to Think, without giving any external Sign by Word or otherwise? As to what concerns the Apparitions of Spirits, and the Relations which an infinite Number of People have given of them, since the Infidels cannot deny the Possibility of these Beings, but on the contrary their Opinion obliges them to believe that all Places are full of them, they are very unreasonable to reject those Histories that are given of them, for this Reason only, because they were never Eye-witnesses of such Things. But how then can they believe such Things, as they have never seen nor understood!

My

My Second Consideration is, That tho' the Soul were Material, it would by no means follow from thence, as the *Libertines* very foolishly flatter themselves, that it must perish at our Death. If the Atoms of which it is compos'd Think within us, why should they not also think without us, as I have already observ'd? Do not these Corpuscles always subsist, and what should hinder them from preserving the same Figure and Motion, which they had before? It would therefore be against all Reason for them to pretend, that they should lose their Properties, at such time as they were more unconfin'd and free, and consequently more capable of performing their Operations.

Tho' our Soul were Material, it would by no means follow from thence, that it was Mortal.

The Second P R O O F,

*Taken from the Properties of the Soul,
and the Justice of God.*

IF the Immateriality of the Soul does undeniably prove, that it is by Nature Immortal, its other Properties which I mention'd at the Beginning of this Chapter, do no less evidently prove this Truth. Are not its Activity, its Penetration, the wonderful Extent of its Understanding, such Marks of its Celestial Original, as plainly shew, that it was not form'd to

perish with a vile Lump of Matter, whose Duration is so short and so miserable? Its prodigious Desire of Knowledge and Happiness, which can never be satisfy'd with all its Enquiries and Labours; the Poverty, the Misery, the infinite Emptiness it finds in the midst of the Abundance of all things here below; the Ardent Desire it has of Immortality, the extreme Horror it has of Annihilation; Does not all this plainly discover the Excellency of the Soul, and that it was created for such good things as are quite different from those of this Earth? If it be certain that God does nothing in vain, which no Man can doubt of, Is it conceivable, that he has given Man such Desires, which cannot be satisfy'd with the Possession of all the Things in this World, except he be design'd for the Enjoyment of all he Desires, and which he seeks for in vain here below? But my Design of Brevity obliges me to pass slightly over so sensible a Proof, to which I shall now subjoin another which is taken from the Justice of a Being infinitely Perfect.

This Proof is founded upon two uncontestable Principles: The First is, That supposing there be a God, in whom we live, move and have our Being, as I have demonstrated, 'tis evident that we ought to Love him, Reverence, Fear and Serve him; and since all Men are his Creatures, and the Objects of his Goodness, 'tis no less evident that we ought to
treat

treat them after the same Manner, as we wish they would treat us. This is a Duty which we are so clearly taught by our own Reason and Conscience, that there is no Person who has the least Reason, but will grant, That Vertue consists in practising this Duty, and that it is a Crime to violate it.

The Second Principle which cannot be deny'd, is, That God is infinitely just, and that this Attribute obliges him to Punish Vice, and Reward Vertue; for if he should do otherwise, he would act contrary to his own Perfections, which is altogether impossible.

From these Principles I have laid down, it appears, That if there be in this World some Wicked Men, whose Vices are accompanied with the greatest Prosperity, * and on the contrary, if there be many good Men, whose best Days are but miserable, God would act directly contrary to his Justice, in dispensing the good and evil of this Life, unless he set these Things streight after Death, by rendring to every Man according to his Works. From hence it necessarily follows, that our Soul is Immortal, and that it must one Day appear before the Tribunal of the Lord of the Universe, to be judg'd according to what it has done, whether Good or Evil.

* Creber-
rima & trif-
tia in bonos,
Læta apud
deteriores.
Tacit. Ann. l.
6. 22

*The great
Wisdom of God
in his Admini-
stration of Af-
fairs towards
Men.*

I cannot here but admire the infinite Wisdom of God, who in his wonderful Administration of Affairs with Respect to the Actions of Men, has given such visible Tokens of his Providence, the Immortality of the Soul, and a Judgment to come. To convince us, that he sees all our Actions and that nothing escapes his Knowledge, and that he is a God of Vengeance, he often discovers the most secret Crimes, in such an unexpected, extraordinary and wonderful Manner, that 'tis impossible, if one attends but a little to the Circumstances of the Discovery, to avoid acknowledging that they are the Effects of his Justice, and that he governs all Things by his Providence: But on the other Hand, we see that he suffers wicked Men to succeed in all they desire to obtain, who are the Scourges of Mankind, and spend their Lives, in Plenty, Honour, Health and Pleasure, while a great many good Men suffer Hunger, Thirst and Cold, and are, to use the common Phrase, the Sport of Fortune. And why is it so? Is it not plain, that it is to teach us that Providence is not confin'd to what is done in this World, and that there must be another Life, wherein God will treat the Wicked and Vertuous, the bad rich Men and the good *Lazarusses*, without Respect of Persons, by the most exact Rules of Justice and Equity? If God should not punish any Crime here below, there might be

be some Doubt of Providence: If he should punish all Crimes, and Vertue should never be oppress'd, there would be some Reason to doubt of the Immortality of the Soul, and a Judgment to come; but he so wisely dispenses the Actions of his Severity and Justice, of his Patience and Goodness, that we plainly perceive undeniable Proofs of the most important Truths of Religion,

The Third P R O O F.

Taken from the Truth of the Holy Scripture.

IF it be granted that the Holy Scriptures are true, it cannot be denied but the Soul is Immortal: And therefore by demonstrating, as I hope to do, That no reasonable Doubt can be made of any thing contain'd in these sacred Writings, I shall at the same Time prove these Three Fundamental Doctrines, That there is a God, that he governs all Things by his Providence, and that the Soul will be eternally happy or miserable according as it has done Good or Evil in this Body.

I shall not insist upon the other Proofs of the Immortality of our Soul, since it is a Truth which God has so deeply engraven upon our Hearts, that all Mankind would have a lively Sense of it, if the Mind were not deluded by a deprav'd Heart.

If

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If any one could but still the Noise of his Passions, he would certainly hear the Voice of Conscience, which for the small Time that remains of this Life, speaks always loud enough, to be heard by all that are willing to listen to it.

I proceed therefore to the Second Book, wherein I will endeavour to demonstrate, That there must of Necessity be a Religion Reveal'd by God.

B O O K.

B O O K II.

Of the Necessity of a Religion Reveal'd by God.

HAVING prov'd the Existence of a God against the Atheists, and a Providence, and the Immortality of the Soul against the Epicurean Deists, I proceed now to shew the Necessity of a particular Religion reveal'd by God, against the Opinion of those, who imagine that all Religions are indifferent, and that God himself takes pleasure in their Diversity, and that at most it is sufficient to serve him according to the Light of Nature. To confute these Errors, and establish the Truth, it will be necessary to prove these Four Things; First, That all Men ought to have one Religion or other; Secondly, That this Religion ought to be reasonable, and sufficient to procure us Salvation; Thirdly, That all Religions devis'd by Men, are contrary to Right Reason; And Lastly, That

That Natural Religion is very defective, and consequently insufficient for our Salvation. From these Four Principles it will necessarily follow, That God who is infinitely good, has positively declar'd to Men the manner in which he will be serv'd. I shall treat of this Matter, with all possible Brevity.

C H A P. I.

That all Men ought to have one Religion or other.

ALL Mankind must grant, That what we call Religion consists in acknowledging a Deity and paying him some Worship. Now if I have demonstratively prov'd by Reason the Three Principles I formerly laid down, *viz.* That there is a God, that this God governs the Universe, and that he will one Day reward and punish Men according to their Works, Does it not plainly follow from these Principles, which are the first Part of Religion, That we ought all to honour and serve this Sovereign Being, on whom we depend for all our Happiness, both in this Life and that which is to come, that's to say in a Word, That we ought to have one Religion or other?

But

But to give some *Idea* of that Worship we are oblig'd to pay unto God, I will here observe, that in general it may be reduc'd to these Heads. To love most fervently this perfect Being, to Reverence him, to adore him, to praise him for his infinite Perfections, to put our Trust in his Goodness, to thank him for his Benefits, to fear him for his Judgments, to pray unto him in our Wants, in a Word, To think, say and do all that we think will be most acceptable to him. I add, That since the Notion we have of God discovers to us that he takes pleasure in Order and Union, we ought as Children of the same Father, as Servants of the same Lord, as Subjects of the same Sovereign, to joyn together in Societies, as much as is possible, to render to him our Homage with one Heart, and one Voice, and mutually to Inflame our Zeal by such a pious Emulation, as may excite us to excel one another in the performance of our Religious Duties.

This Service is so reasonable, and is so necessary a Consequence from the Doctrines I have Demonstrated, that all People who have acknowledg'd a God, a Providence, and the Immortality of the Soul, have naturally concluded from these Principles, that the Practice of Religion was the Duty of all Men. *To serve the Gods*, says Socrates in Xenophon, *is a Law receiv'd by all People.* Dio Chrysostom of Prusa calls Religion, *A Persuasion which is*
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necessarily and naturally in all Men who have Reason, in Barbarians as well as Greeks. And a little below he adds, That this perswasion is very strong, and that it is, and has been in all times among all Nations. It would be needless to insist longer upon a Truth so evident as this, That all Men ought to have some Religion: I proceed therefore to the Second Proposition, which does not also require any long Proof.

C H A P. II.

That Religion ought to be Reasonable, and sufficient to procure us Salvation.

IF it be plain that Men are oblig'd to have some Religion, which is undoubtedly true, 'tis no less plain, that this Religion ought to be agreeable to Reason, *i. e.* that it ought to correspond as much as is possible, to the Excellency of the Divine Attributes, and the Dignity of our Soul. Otherwise we shall be so far from rendring to our Creator an acceptable Service, that it cannot but be injurious to him, and consequently much more proper to provoke his Wrath, than to bring down his Blessings upon us. Thus all Religion which is Idolatrous, which deifies the Creatures, which attributes to a most perfect Being, the Passions and Vices of Men, whose Rites are
impure

impure, which is acted by a Spirit of Cruelty and Persecution, is certainly a detestable Religion in the Eyes of God, and altogether unworthy of his Excellency and ours. This is so sensible a Truth, that I cannot imagine how there can be any People so Senseless, as to think that all Religions are indifferent to God, and that he takes Pleasure in their Diversity.

But it is not enough for Religion to be reasonable, it must also have another Essential Property; I mean it must be sufficient to procure us Salvation: And this Sufficiency consists in teaching us all things which we ought to believe and do, to render us eternally happy. Since any one of common Sense may easily perceive that this Condition is absolutely necessary to Religion, and since I shall have Occasion to add something upon this Subject in the Fourth Chapter, I shall not here insist any longer upon it, but proceed to my Third Proposition.

C H A P. III.

That all Religions which have been invented by Men are contrary to Reason.

ALL the Religions which have ever been in the World, may be reduc'd to these Four. The Jewish, the Pagan, Christian and Mahometan. Since I shall endeavour hereafter to prove, that God has reveal'd the First and the Third, I will not here consider them: And to prove that the other Two were devised by Men, it will be sufficient to relate some part of the many Absurdities, wherewith they are stuffed.

Altho' Paganism be almost as ancient as the World, Men being at all Times very liable to be decelv'd; yet this great Antiquity ought not to prejudice us in its Favour. To make a right Judgment of it, we need only read the Pagan Authors themselves who have treated about it, and the different Relations of those who have travell'd among these People, who have no Knowledge of the true God, and it will plainly appear, that nothing can be more contrary to Right Reason than the Religion of these Miserable Wretches. The Religion of the ancient Pagans was wholly founded upon palpable and extravagant

vagant Errors, upon Gross Fables stuff'd with a thousand Contradictions and a thousand Impieties, wholly unworthy of the Majesty of a most perfect Being, and the Excellency of reasonable Creatures. What Person of any Judgment would not be extremely shock'd at the almost infinite Number of their Gods, among whom they plac'd the most Salacious Animals, the Plants, the vilest inanimate Beings, the most shameful Passions, and even Diseases themselves? Now if these Idolaters made such a ridiculous Choice of their Gods, we may very well think, that they were not more wise in the *Idea* they fram'd of their Properties: For they do not only attribute to them the Weaknesses of Human Nature, but they charge them also with most horrid Crimes, such as, Drunkenness, Injustice, Theft, Incontinence, Adultery, Incest, Sodomy, &c. This was the fine Theology of these poor blind Souls, who were no less unreasonable in the Service they paid to their false Gods. The Sacrifices they offer'd them, the Ceremonies, the Festivals, the Sports they instituted to their Honour, were celebrated for the most Part, after such a Manner, that Modesty forbids me to relate. Every thing in their Worship, was gross, sensual, impertinent and abominable. But, what were the People who were engag'd in these Errors, and in a Practice so detestable? The most Witty, the most Polite, the most Learned that were in all Antiquity; the *Caldeans*, *Egyptians*, the

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Greeks

Greeks and *Romans*, as wise as they pretended to be, were addicted to such Superstitions as were unworthy of Persons less sensible than they: And if there were some Philosophers, some extraordinary Wits, that reprov'd them, yet in their external Actions they follow'd the Torrent as others did; and the Example of *Socrates* is a good Proof, that if any one spoke a little too freely, he was in Danger of being Sacrific'd to the Fury of the Common People, and the Gods whom they had offended.

If the most civiliz'd and knowing Nations, did lapse into so great and so shameful Extravagancies, we may very well believe that all the other Idolaters were not more reasonable than these. For since they were so extravagant, as to Place the Creatures upon the Throne of the Creator, 'tis impossible but they must sin in Consequence of this Principle, and their Worship must be as absurd and impious as their Belief. I shall not therefore spend time, in relating what Travellers have written of *Paganism* as it is at this Day, which would be a needless Labour, and would engage me in too long a Discourse: It will be more to the purpose to examine in a few Words, the Religion of *Mahomet*, which has been profess'd for many Ages by a great Part of the World.

That we may have a true Idea of it, we must consider what Doctrine it teaches, and what Means have been us'd to establish

blish and maintain it for so long a time. As to its Doctrines, they are contain'd in a Book call'd the *Alcoran*, written by *Mahomet* an *Arabian* by Nation, who was born about the Year 570 of our Salvation. He has scatter'd here and there in this Book some good Things which he has extracted out of the Old and New Testament. As for Instance, he acknowledges *Moses* for a great Prophet, and *Jesus Christ* for the *Messias* promis'd to the Jews in the Holy Scriptures: He extols also mightily the Unity and some other Attributes of God: But with these Truths, he mixes so many sensual Errors, so many Childish Tales and Follies, which are inconsistent with the Perfections of the Sovereign Being and with Right Reason, that he must needs be altogether Blind, who does not perceive that this New Lawgiver was an Impostor, whose only Design was to make himself Head of a New Sect, and to entice all sorts of Persons to embrace it, by accommodating himself on the one Hand to their Religion, and on the other allowing them the most sensual Pleasures. I shall not trouble my self, to relate all the Follies with which he has stuff'd his Book, which would be too tedious; those who are at leisure may themselves consult this Register of Extravagancies, and let him be never so serious, I am perswaded he can hardly refrain from Laughing at the Chimerical Fancies he will find there in many Places.

But they are not only the Impertinences and Contradictions, of which the Alcoran is full, which discover that the Author of it was an Impostor; but the Method which he and his Followers made use of for establishing and propagating his Doctrine, do prove it yet more evidently. Since this pretended Prophet had not the gift of Miracles, and he himself confesses that he was not sent from God with a Power of doing them, he had Recourse to the Human Means which he thought most proper for Executing his Designs: Yet some Authors have affirm'd, that he taught a Pigeon to come and eat in his Ear, that he might make the silly People believe, that it was the Holy Spirit, which cloth'd itself with this Form, to reveal to him from God what he was to teach Men. But considering that he could not reasonably Hope for Success by this little Trick of Wit, which was good for nothing but to deceive Fools, (if it be true that he did make Use of it) he took other Measures which were much more effectual to secure him good Success. And First, he begun with preaching his Doctrine to the wretched *Arabs*, who were exceeding clownish and ignorant Idolaters, who were Brutish, Unchast, Thievish and Cruel; a People who by these brave Qualities, had all the Dispositions necessary for receiving what he taught them. Had he address'd himself to understanding Men they would quickly have discover'd the Falschood of his Fables

Fables, and would have stoutly opposed them, as did the most rational of this People, who oblig'd him to fly from *Mecca* and retire to *Medina*. The Second Means by which he hop'd to establish successfully his Religion, was by granting great Indulgence, as to *Polygamy* and Divorces from Marriage: For knowing by his own Natural Inclination, and that of his Followers, that the Love of Women is the most violent and darling Passion of the greatest Part of Men, he permitted them to Marry four Wives, and to divorce them whenever they pleas'd, and to take as many Concubines, as they could maintain; with a Promise moreover to his pious Disciples, that after their Death they should be admitted into a Paradise, where they should enjoy the finest Women they could possibly desire, or imagine. The Third Thing which he did, and which was a special good Precaution, was to command expressly all those that should embrace his Doctrine, to submit to it with an implicate Faith, without enquiring, without doubting or raising any Disputes about it. He had Sense enough to foresee what would happen if any one should have the Liberty to examine it. All these Means which I have related, did not appear sufficient to this pretended Ambassador from Heaven, to make any great Number of *Proselytes*, and therefore he order'd his Missionaries, contrary to the Precepts of *Jesus Christ*, (whom yet he acknowledg'd

to be the Word, the Mind and the Wisdom of God) to give no Quarters to Unbelievers, who should be so bold as to oppose his New Law. When you meet with Unbelievers, says he in the Chapter of Battles, cut off their Head, kill them, make them Prisoners, and never cease to persecute them, until they have laid down their Arms and submitted to you. And to encourage them most powerfully to follow this charitable Maxim, he promises all those who die in these Holy Wars, that they shall go streight to Paradise, notwithstanding all the Crimes they may have committed during their whole Life. Never was a Captain better obey'd; for his Zealous Followers made Use of Fire and Sword for propagating *Mahometism*, and there was no other way for a conquer'd People to escape their Fury, but by embracing their Religion.

Thus I have given a slight Description of *Paganism* and *Mahometism*, which tho' it be but superficial, is nevertheless sufficient to convince us, that these Religions were invented by Men, are contrary to the Principles of Right Reason, and most unworthy of the Divine Majesty, and the Excellency of Human Nature. Let us now proceed to consider Natural Religion.

C H A P. IV.

That Natural Religion is most Defective, and consequently insufficient.

THE Deists who follow what we call *Natural Religion*, have no Meetings, wherein they worship God together with an external Service, and therefore it may be reasonably doubted, whether their pretended Worship deserves the Name of Religion. But, tho' we might justly dispute this Advantage with them, yet I will readily grant it them, and withal acknowledge that this Religion is incomparably more reasonable, than those I have just now treated of. But whatsoever preheminance it may have above *Paganism* and *Mahometism*, 'tis certain that it leaves us ignorant of many Things, which are necessary for us to know in order to our Salvation, and consequently that it is insufficient.

That we may the better make a Judgment of this important Article, the Deists must above all Things take heed, that ~~that~~ they do not attribute to their own Reason, the Discovery of certain Truths, which they, without thinking of it, derive from Revelation, tho' they appropriate them to the Vigour and Force of Human Understanding. For 'tis not reasonable to

give that Honour to the Creatures, which belongs only to the Creator.

After they have well examined themselves about this Matter, that they may not rob God of that Glory which is due to him, they must do these Two Things. First, they must enquire into the Belief and Worship of all these People, who had no other Guide but the Light of Nature; Secondly, They must seriously reflect upon the Extent, and Capacity of their own Reason. And if they understand how to think, I am certain that they will not fail to find in this Examination Two strong Proofs, One from matter of Fact, and the other from their own Experience, which will convince them, That it is not possible for a Man to discover of himself, all that he ought to know and practise for obtaining Eternal Happiness.

The First P R O O F,
That Natural Religion is Insufficient.

AS to the First Proof which is from Matter of Fact, let it be carefully considered what the most ingenious *Pagans* have Thought of the Deity, and the Service they have pay'd him: Let them cast their Eyes upon the Monuments which remain of the Religion of the *Caldeans, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans*, who are accounted the Oracles of Antiquity. What was their Theology? I have formerly

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ly shewn, that it was the most monstrous in the World. Altho' the Creator had engraven upon the Hearts of all Men the sensible Characters of his own Image, and their Original, and had imprinted upon their Conscience a Sense of their Duty; yet the most knowing, the most civiliz'd among all these Nations who knew not Revelation, fell into Errors more gross than the People that were more barbarous; for God, it seems, was willing hereby to shew, that the wisest Men, without his Assistance, were capable of Nothing but the most shameful Follies. The greatest Wits of these Times, as to Religion, were overspread with thick Darkness, and had nothing but an obscure and crepusculous Light, by which they could but imperfectly see some General Truths. Not only the common People consented to the most extravagant Absurdities, but even the Philosophers were not otherwise distinguish'd from them, but by vain Disputes, by airy Speculations, by pompous empty shews of Learning, which are so far from delivering a Man from his Doubts and Mistakes, that they are only fit to throw him into an inextricable Labyrinth of new Difficulties. The most Rational among them have not yet been able, to disengage themselves from all the Superstitions of their Country; and to frame just *Idea's* of the Attributes of God, and of our Misery, and the Remedy he has found out for it; neither know they how to render to the Supreme Being a Worship suitable to

to his Perfections, and the Excellency of our Soul. Now if the People who surpassed all others as to human Knowledge, were so ignorant as to the Truths of Religion; Is not this an experimental Proof, that we cannot by the Light of Nature know God, nor how to serve him in an acceptable Manner.

The Second P R O O F,

Of the Insufficiency of Natural Religion.

LET us now see what our own Reason teaches us, and if we hear it without Prejudice, it will tell us, that there are many Things which our Natural Reason cannot discover, of which we must be well-inform'd, that we may prevent our falling into deadly Errors, and excite our fervent Love of God, and true Confidence in him. Among the rest I shall observe these Two: The First is the Original of Concupiscence, which is the Inclination that is born with us, whereby we are strongly mov'd to commit those Actions we condemn. We feel within ourselves such violent Opposition as we cannot reconcile. Our Mind and our Heart speak a quite different Language, and are almost always at odds. What Part shall we then take in this Intestine War? Shall we side with our Mind? But it opposes our most pleasant Inclinations? Shall we take part with

with the Heart? But it is contrary to our Judgment. The greatest Difficulty of our Choice arises hence, That our Reason and Passion, how opposite soever they be, appear to us equally Natural, and so give us Occasion to doubt, whether it be not from the Prejudice of Education and Custom, that our Conscience disallows the Inclinations that are born with us. If Man is the Workmanship of a God most perfect, will the *Libertines* say, How can he have such Damnable Inclinations? And if he has them, How can he be the Workmanship of a God most Perfect? This is a Difficulty which the greatest *Pagan* Philosophers never could, nor indeed ever can resolve. Their Knowledge, however large and profound, fell short of justifying clearly in this Case the Holiness and Wisdom of God, and could not lay a solid Foundation for the real Difference between Vertue and Vice, nor determine themselves with evident Certainty as to the Conduct of their Life. The First Inventors of Sciences, I mean the *Caldeans*, endeavouring to explain this *Enigma*, which is naturally inexplicable, fell into that absurd and impious Error of *Two Principles*, the one Good and the other Bad, in which they were followed a long Time after by the *Manicheans*, whose Errors *St. Austin* himself embrac'd before his Conversion. Now if it be unquestionable by the Confession of Right Reason, that we cannot of ourselves discover the Fatal Original of our Corruption,

ruption, and that the Knowledge of it is nevertheless absolutely necessary, that we may humbly render to God the Glory that's due to his Holiness, and that we may prevent any Mistake in choosing what Part we should adhere to, from hence it plainly follows, That Natural Religion is defective and insufficient.

The Second Thing most necessary for us to know, and which we cannot learn by the mere Light of Nature, is the true way of satisfying the Justice of God for the Sins we have committed against him. We all know by the Testimony and the Rebukes of our Conscience, that we have an infinite number of Times violated the Laws engraven upon our Heart; and besides, Right Reason informs us, That God being infinitely Holy and infinitely Just, these Perfections do indispensably oblige him to punish Vice; and that all of us being thus guilty, we deserve to suffer the Punishment due to our Disobedience, unless the Justice of God be aton'd by some Expiation worthy of his most excellent Majesty.

But can Man by Natural Light discover this kind of Expiation? Can he frame so much as the least Idea of it? All People have been sensible of the necessity of it. It was a Truth so manifest and withal so important, that they have very carefully search'd for every thing which appear'd to them most proper to render the Deity Propitious. Let us now see what Methods

Methods they us'd to that Purpose : They could imagine only Two things, but which were plainly incapable of producing this great Effect.

First, They offer'd Sacrifices, thinking by that means to turn away the Punishment they acknowledg'd to be justly deserv'd. But is it not evident, that there can be no Proportion between an Infinite Being whom we had offended, and all the Sacrifices we could offer unto him? If we sacrifice Beasts to him, what Virtue has the Blood of these Vile Creatures to expiate our Iniquities? Is it a sufficient Price to pay for our Ransom? If we should cut the Throats of Men, and offer to him Human Sacrifices, can we flatter ourselves, that he should smell a sweet Savour of Atonement for the Slaughter of a Man like ourselves, whose Life did not belong to us, and who was a Criminal as well as we? Lastly, if we should Sacrifice our Selves, what would we do hereby, but augment the Number of our Offences, and hasten the eternal Punishment that is due to us? 'Tis evident therefore, that all the Offerings we can present to God, are of no value with him, and consequently are no wise sufficient to disarm his Justice.

The Second sort of Satisfaction, which the Sense of Mens Sins did naturally suggest to them, is Repentance. It cannot be deny'd but this Remorse of Conscience, this Sorrow for having offended God, is very acceptable to him: Neither Reason
nor

nor the Holy Scripture, will permit us to doubt of it. But is our displeasure for having committed Faults any Expiation of them; Since our Displeasure has not the Virtue to change the Nature of our past Actions, I mean, of making those good which were evil? Repentance is properly no more but our Sorrow for having contracted Debts towards God, but it is not the Payment of them: And besides, we know by sad Experience, that how sincere soever it be, it is never so perfect as to hinder us from Relapsing into new Sins, the least of which deserves Punishment from our Sovereign Judge.

This being suppos'd, *viz.* If it be undeniable That all Men have transgress'd the Laws of God, That the Justice of the most perfect Being cannot suffer sin to go unpunish'd, and That we neither have, nor know by the Light of Nature any kind of Expiation, that is sufficient to satisfy this Justice, what follows from hence? Is it not evident, that we being convinc'd of these terrible Truths, cannot look upon God but as a Judge justly provok'd, who will punish our Faults with such Pains as are proportionable to their Greatness and Number? And if this be so, can we love him with a true tenderness? Do not those Perfections which we have highly Affronted, oppose that Love and Confidence which his Mercy might have inspir'd into us? And what other effect can the Sense of our Sins, and the Thought of our utter incapacity to make our Peace with God,

God, produce in us, but to plunge us into a dreadful Despair, which is a State inconsistent with any other Affections but those of Rage and Hatred.

Seeing then it is otherwise certain, as Right Reason informs us, That we cannot please God without having a filial Love for him, and without putting our whole Trust in his Goodness ; and That Natural Religion, being ignorant of the true Way of satisfying Divine Justice, does not permit us to have these Two Qualifications which are so Necessary ; It is manifest That this Religion is defective, and insufficient, and that it cannot be acceptable to God.

From this Truth, and the Three others I have laid down before, *viz.* That every Man ought to have some Religion, That this Religion ought to be reasonable and sufficient to Salvation, and That all those Religions which have been devis'd by Men, are contrary to Reason ; I conclude, that it was absolutely necessary that God, whose Goodness to us appears infinite, should clearly reveal all that we ought to know and practise to make us eternally happy.

I might produce many other Proofs of the necessity of a Revelation ; but I shall no longer insist upon this Article, seeing in effect it is sufficient to confirm the certainty of it, That I plainly prove, there really is a Reveal'd Religion, which I hope to demonstrate with all the strength that the Brevity I propose to my self will permit.

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B O O K III.

That the Jewish and Christian Religion were Reveal'd by God.

IF any one will but a little consider the weakness of our Natural Light, 'tis easie to perceive, as I have already shown, that it is not sufficient to teach us all Things we ought to know, that we may perform the Service of God in an acceptable manner; which makes me wonder, that there should be some People who believe the Three First Principles of Religion, and yet will not grant the necessity of a Revelation.

But if these obstinate Infidels would but lay aside their Prejudices and examine seriously, with a sincere desire to know the Truth, the Reasons I shall now alledge, to prove that the Religion contain'd in what we call the H. Scripture, is indeed reveal'd by God, I am certain they must be convinc'd of this great Truth.

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To demonstrate this by direct Proofs, I will begin with some general Characters of our sacred Books, which plainly show, that God is the Author of the Doctrine contain'd in them: Then I shall proceed to a more particular Examination of them, and prove the certainty of the Facts related in the Writings of *Moses*; and chiefly I shall endeavour to prove, That those on which Christianity is founded deserve an entire Belief.

C H A P. I.

Of the Characters that Revelation ought to have: And that these Characters do perfectly agree to the Jewish and Christian Religion.

IF the Works of the Creation bear the evident Marks of the Hand of him that made them, it cannot be doubted, but if it pleas'd God to reveal to Men after a peculiar Manner the Decrees of his Will, as to what was necessary for them to believe and practise in order to Salvation, he might stamp upon his Revelation such peculiar Characters, that any one who carefully consider'd it, could clearly perceive its Original, and distinguish it from human Forgeries: And this is what his Goodness has done, as I shall now endeavour

deavour to prove in a few Words. I shall make choice only of Four of these Characters, which will be sufficient to show that if any Religion has them stamp'd upon it, it must necessarily come from God. It is necessary,

1. That the Revelation be worthy of God, and of Man to whom it is address'd.

The Characters of Divine Revelation.

2. That it confirm what Right Reason teaches, and enlighten our Darkneſs.

3. That it be ſo ſuited to our Weakneſs, that it may be eaſily underſtood by the ſimpleſt People, and at the ſame time ſo Sublime, as to diſcover to us the Excellency of its Author.

4. That all its different Parts do perfectly agree among themſelves.

1. As to the Firſt Character it Plainly appears, from what I have ſaid above, That it is not at all to be found in *Paganism*. For what is

1st. Character, That it muſt be worthy of God and Man.

more unworthy of God and Man, than that almoſt infinite Multitude, of ridiculous Deities, whoſe ordinary Diversions would make any wiſe Man aſham'd? What is more unworthy of any rational Being than that inhuman and impious a Worſhip, wherewith the Pagans pretended to honour them? I grant that ſome Philoſophers diſtinguiſh'd themſelves from the Common People by their more noble

timents, and paid to the Sovereign Being a more pure Service: But can it be deny'd, that the great Motive by which the far greater Part of these pretended Wise-Men were acted, was the Love of Glory: And if there were any that really lov'd Vertue, they never carried it higher than to love it for itself, and that perhaps there is not any among them that can be found who lov'd it for God's Sake? As to *Mahometism*, I shall not insist upon it any longer than I have done, to shew that it is a Hotch-potch of Fables and gross Absurdities; that every thing in it is carnal, and favours of human Weakness and Policy.

Tho' these false Religions offer nothing to the Mind of Man, but what is ridiculous and contemptible, yet the Case is not the same as to the *Jewish and Christian* Religion. In whatsoever Place you open the Books which contain their Doctrine, you may perceive sensible Marks of their Excellency: Every thing in them tends to exalt, and make us admire the Perfections of God; his Eternity, his Unity, his Power, his Immutability, his Wisdom, Goodness, Justice and Providence; his immense Charity to Mankind, &c. What can be more worthy of God? On the other Hand, every thing there tends to induce a Man to fear God, to love him with all his Heart, with all his Strength, and to prefer him before all his Creatures, and even before his own Life; to obey Religiously his Commands;
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to return to him after he hath offended him, to humble and abase himself in his Presence, to call upon him earnestly, to put his whole Trust in him, to refer all his Actions to his Glory, to aspire after nothing but the Happiness of enjoying him, to love his Neighbour as himself, to do him Good for Evil, &c. Let any one search into all the Theologies of human Invention; Let him read over all the Laws of the wisest Lawgivers, and he will never find any thing that comes near these Doctrines. From whence then could they be inspir'd who taught them? Could a People shut up in a little Corner of the World, as in ancient Times the *Jews* were, a People rude and without Civility, who were almost wholly employ'd in Tilling the Ground and Feeding their Flocks, or some other mean Occupation, a People who mightily despis'd the Schools, the Customs, the Sciences, the Religion of all the *Pagans*, with whom they would have no Conversation; Could such a People, I say, be capable of themselves to advance such Doctrines as infinitely transcended the sublimest Conceptions of the most ingenious People? Can this be believ'd, if any one carefully considers it and without Prejudice? On the contrary is it not evident, that whatsoever so far exceeds the Capacity and the utmost Efforts of the most learned Men, could only proceed from God?

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2. *It ought to be agreeable to Right Reason, and to enlighten our Darkness.*

2. As to the Second Character, let us hearken a little what Right Reason says. We have already seen, that it teaches us that Matter being an imperfect Being, it is impossible that it should exist from itself, and consequently that it should be Eternal: That having no active Principle in itself, it must of Necessity receive its Motion from God, and the various Determinations of this Motion, which was necessary for framing those several Bodies which are the Objects of our Admiration; That our Soul, whose Properties are so wonderful, and unaccountable, cannot be Material, and therefore is to subsist after the Dissolution of this Body to which it is united. What says the Scripture as to these Sentiments of Reason? It teaches us, That God created the World of Nothing, that he giveth Life, Motion and Being to all the Creatures, and that the Soul is Immortal. It teaches us also agreeably to Reason, That there is but one God, to whom alone we ought to pay our Adorations, that he will render to every Man according to his Works, &c. It tells us that the Novelty of Arts and Sciences, of Histories and Works of the greatest Antiquity, do invincibly prove that the World was not very ancient, and that it is not very Many Ages since it was created.

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Revelation ought not only perfectly to agree with Right Reason, but it ought also to clear up our Doubts, to remove Difficulties, and to reconcile those apparent Contradictions which we observe in ourselves, and between some Attributes of God. Man is to himself a dark Labyrinth wherein his Understanding loses itself, a Compound of so much Greatness and Meanness, as confounds all his reasoning, and divides the Sentiments of the most able Philosophers. Those who consider'd nothing in him but what is noble and sublime, being ravish'd with the Structure of a Human Body, and especially with the Activity, the penetrating Vertue, and the Sublimeness of the Mind, which is capable of inventing so many Arts, so many Sciences, so Admirable, so Useful, have extraordinarily boasted of it, and have not been afraid, to make it in some sort even equal to the Deity, maintaining that the Soul was a Particle, a Ray, a Spark of that infinite Substance. Others on the contrary considering only the extreme Misery of Man, his Ignorance and Uncertainty, his Errors and Infirmities, his childish Amusements which are almost always criminal, the prodigious Number of Diseases to which he is subject, the Shortness of his Life, his brutish Passions, in a Word his Vices and Emptiness, have degraded him from his Nobility, and depress'd him below the Beasts that perish: Such are the contrary Sentiments of some about Man; and yet how opposite soever

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they be, it must be confess'd, that never were any better founded, since 'tis undeniable, that those Qualities, which give Occasion to their Opposition are to be found in the same subject. When a Man is considered with Regard to his Perfections, then 'tis reasonable to say, that nothing excels his Nature but God who gave him Being, and those happy Spirits who enjoy the Divine Presence: But when we attend only to his prodigious Number of Defects, we have no less Reason to say, that he is but one remove from Dust and Ashes. But that which is yet more surprizing to all those who are not enlightned with a supernatural Light, are those struglings above-mention'd, which we feel continually within ourselves, between the Lower and Superior Part of the Soul, *i. e.* between Right Reason and Concupiscence. We approve and condemn, we desire and fear, we will and will not the same Things. Our Pleasures are for the most Part mingl'd with the Bitterness of Remorse, and the Satisfaction of our Lusts is commonly the sad Occasion of a sorrowful Repentance. Let us reflect as much as we please upon the Principle of so great Contrarieties, so sensible, so surprizing, our greatest Discoveries will reach no further than some slight Conjectures, by which we can never attain to any thing that is certain. But when we come to consult the Scripture, our Darkness is dispell'd by its Light; at the opening of this Seal, all these hidden Mysteries

ries are reveal'd. The Creation of Man and his unhappy Fall, like the Word which is the Key of a Riddle otherwise inexplicable, discovers to us all on a sudden the Source of so great Struglings. God created Man after his own Image, he gave him an understanding Soul, pure and innocent; this is the Principle of our Greatness, and of that Remainder of Love we still have for Vertue. Man forgetting his Duty to God, revolted from him and fell into Disobedience: This was the Original of his Meanness, his Darkness and vicious Inclinations, in a Word of all the Defects and Miseries which inseparably attend him during the whole Course of his Life.

Now if after we have cast our Eyes upon ourselves, we lift them up to God, we discern in this most perfect Being, such Attributes as our feeble Reason cannot reconcile. We see on one side, that he is infinitely just, and that this Property obliges him to punish Sin with the Torment it deserves; and on the other side we know that he is no less merciful, and that he loves his Creatures with a paternal Tendernefs. If Man has sinn'd, he must die, but if all Men are thus punish'd without any Pardon, what will become of the Clemency of the Creator? Will not this be an useless Perfection in him? These are the Contradictions in which we lose our Selves, and which our Reason cannot reconcile. Who then shall make them agree? The H. Scripture. It teaches

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ches us, That immediately after Man had violated the Law of his Sovereign, he found him in stead of an implacable Judge, a gracious Father, who having a tender Affection for the Master-Piece of his Works, propos'd to him a specific Remedy for his Evils, a certain Method of gratifying his Mercy by satisfying his Justice; I mean the Death of his only Son, by which Sacrifice alone the Sin of Man could be perfectly expiated. The Revelation of these Mysteries so sublime, so much above the reach of Human Imagination, and the knowledge whereof is nevertheless so necessary to our Salvation, is the most plain Character that can be desir'd of the Divinity of the H. Scripture.

3. Character,
It ought to be
at once both
simple and su-
blime.

The Third Character does no less exactly agree to it than the Two former. And it is this, That what is absolutely necessary for us to know in Order to our Salvation, is reveal'd to us after such a manner as is suitable to the Capacity of all Mankind, and with so much Simplicity, Sweetness, and such an Air of Sincerity, that we are in a Manner forc'd by our inward Sensation to give Credit to all that is related in it. When we read, for instance, the History of *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of Joseph and his Brethren, of the Israelites Departure out of Egypt, of their Sojourning in the Wilderness, of their Entrance into*

into the Land of *Canaan*, &c. When from the Old Testament we pass to the Relation of the Acts of Jesus Christ and his Disciples, our Heart is convinc'd at the reading of them, that it was not possible there should be any Trick in these Narratives, which appear so plainly to be free from all Artifice and Affectation.

But as on the one Hand the Revelation is written with so great and so lovely a Simplicity; so on the other Hand it is wonderful lofty in Thoughts and Expressions, becoming the Majesty of him who is the Author of it. Can any thing, for Instance, represent better the Greatness and Power of the Creator, than the Manner in which the Lawgiver of the Jews introduces him speaking when he gave Being to his Creatures, *Let there be Light*, said God, and there was Light. *Let the dry Land appear*, and the dry Land appear'd, &c. * *Longinus* an ingenious Pagan Orator, found so much Sublimity in these Expressions, that he could not but admire them. What can be more beautiful and excellent than that Definition which God himself gave of his own Essence, when he told *Moses*, *Exod. c. 3. I am that I am*? Does not this perfectly agree to the Being of Beings, the Being by way of Excellency, and is it not altogether worthy of his infinite Majesty? I defy any one to shew me in all the Writings of the greatest Orators, and the most

* In his
Treatise of Sub-
limity.

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most learned Philosophers of Antiquity,
any thing that comes near to this incom-
parable Eloquence.

But not only in the *Pentateuch* are
such beautiful Strokes to be found, but
there is a vast Number of other such-like
scatter'd every-where else; and particular-
ly in the *Psalms* from which I cannot
choose but extract some Instances. By the
Word of the Lord, says the Prophet David,
were the Heavens made, and all the Host of
them by the Breath of his Mouth. He spake
and it was done, he commanded and it stood
fast. The Lord bringeth the Counsel of the
Heathen to nought, he maketh the Devices of
the People of none effect, *Psal.* 33. O clap
your Hands, all ye People, shout unto God
with the Voice of Triumph. God reigneth
over the Heathen, he sitteth upon the Throne
of his Holiness, *Psal.* 47. The Lord reigneth,
let the Earth rejoice: Let the multitude of the
Isles be glad thereof. Clouds and Darkness
are round about him; Righteousness and Judg-
ment are the Habitation of his Throne. A Fire
goeth before him and burneth up his Ene-
mies round about. His Lightnings enlightned
the World; the Earth saw and trembled.
The Hills melted like Wax at the Presence of
the Lord; at the Presence of the Lord of the
whole Earth. The Heavens declare his Righ-
teousness, and all the People shew his Glory.
Confounded be all they that serve graven Ima-
ges, that boast themselves of Idols; worship
him, all ye Gods. Sion heard of it and rejoiced,
and the Daughters of Judah were glad, be-
cause of thy Judgments O Lord. For thou,
Lord,

Lord, art high above all the Earth; thou art exalted far above all Gods. Ye that love the Lord hate Evil. He preserveth the Souls of his Saints, and delivereth them from the Hands of the Wicked. Light is sown for the Righteous, and gladness for the upright in Heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye Righteous, and give Thanks for a Remembrance of his Holiness, Psal. 97. Let the Sea roar and the fulness thereof: The World and they that dwell therein. Let the Floods clap their Hands; let the Hills be joyful together, before the Lord, for he cometh to Judge the Earth: With Righteousness shall he judge the World, and the People with Equity, Psal. 98. The Lord reigneth, let the Earth tremble; he sitteth between the Cherubims, let the Earth be mov'd. The Lord is great in Zion, he is high above all People. Let them praise thy great and terrible Name, for it is holy. Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his Footstool, for he is holy, Psal. 99. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, O Lord my God, thou art very great, thou art cloath'd with honour and Majesty; who covereth thy self with Light as with a Garment, who stretchest out the Heavens like a Curtain; who layeth the Beams of his Chambers in the Waters, who maketh the Clouds his Chariots, who walketh upon the Wings of the Wind; who maketh his Angels Spirits, his Ministers a Flame of Fire, &c. Psal. 104. We must almost transcribe all these Hymns, if we would relate all the Places, which discover such an Eloquence as far transcends that of all Human Writers.

Before

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Before I conclude this Article, I cannot but cite some Passages of the Psalms, which express after a most noble Manner, the Trust which the Prophet had in God. *The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life, of whom shall I be afraid? When thou said'st seek ye my Face; my Heart said unto Thee, Thy Face, Lord, will I seek,* Psal. 27. *In God have I put my Trust, I will not Fear what Flesh can do unto me,* Psal. 56. *All Nations compass'd me about, yea they compass'd me about, but in the Name of the Lord will I destroy them. They compass'd me about like Bees, they are quenck'd as the fire of Thorns; for in the Name of the Lord I will destroy them,* Psal. 118. *As the Hart panteth after the Water-Brooks, so panteth my Soul after Thee, O God. My Soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before him?* Psal. 42. Let any one consider carefully this incomparable Mixture of Simplicity and loftiness of Stile, these inimitable Transports of the Sacred Writers, the peculiar Singularity of Stile in the whole Scripture, and he cannot but acknowledge, that no Men were capable of themselves to write after this Manner.

4. *Character; All its Parts must perfectly agree.*

The Fourth Character which Revelation ought to have, is the perfect Agreement and Harmony of all its Parts. Nothing must be contradictory in it, every thing must have an Exact Analogy

logy to other Things, its Doctrines and Precepts must always agree with one another. And this is what is observable in the Holy Scripture. Every thing that is necessary to our Instruction and Salvation is there exactly describ'd, from the Creation of the World, unto the coming of the *Messias* and the Settlement of the Gospel. The great Design of God was to redeem Mankind by the Incarnation and Death of his Son (the Knowledge of which Design was the chief End of Revelation) which was manag'd and accomplished in a wonderful Manner. The greatest Part of these Things which are related in Scripture, have a Tendency to this sublime Mystery, like Lines drawn from the Circumference of a Circle to its Centre. All the Ceremonies of the Old Testament were but Types of it, the Sacrifices prefigur'd, and the Prophecies foretold it. There is scarce any thing considerable under the *Mosaick* Dispensation, which did not point to this great Design. The great Promise which God made to Man, *That the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's Head*, was like the Morning-Light which encreas'd more and more until the full Day, when the Sun of Righteousness appear'd with healing under his Wings. The Oracles which foretold the Birth, the Meanness, the sufferings of the Saviour of the World, his Rejection by the *Jews*, the Calling of the *Gentiles*, became more and more particular and clear, as the Time when these Events were

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were to happen, drew nearer and nearer. The Circumstances of them are so particularly and exactly describ'd, that no Man can attentively consider them, without admiring the Agreement between the Prophecies, and the Events that accomplish'd them. Now I desire to know, whether it can be reasonably imagin'd, that those Men who wrote at such different Times and Places, and consequently could not concert Matters among themselves before-hand, were capable of agreeing so perfectly, in a long Account of the *Christian* Religion, if they had been guided by nothing else but their own Wit and Passion? And if any People be so simple, as to believe a Thing so incredible, can they think that it was naturally possible, to foretel so many Events which answered exactly to the Prophecies made about them, and to foresee what concern'd the *Messias* so long time before he appear'd, and to give so clear an Account of a great Number of particulars which belong'd only to him.

I do verily believe that no Rational Man, who shall examine without Prejudice all this long and wonderful Oeconomy of our Salvation, but must perceive in all the Parts of it the Providence of God, and be fully convinc'd that it is the Contrivance of the Almighty.

Besides these Four general Characters, which may be sufficient to persuade us of the Divinity of the Holy Scripture, we have many other particular Demonstrations

strations which would put this Matter out of all Doubt. I shall not propose all of them, which would require too long a Time, and therefore I shall urge those which are most important: But tho' I might confine my Self only to these which confirm the Truth of the New Testament, since the Doctrine contain'd in it cannot be true, unless that of the Old Testament be true also: Yet that I may omit nothing which can be desir'd upon this Subject, I will now briefly shew the Certainty of the Books of *Moses* upon which all the *Jewish* Religion is founded.

C H A P. II.

Of the Truth of the Books of Moses.

Altho' I might make Use of many convincing Reasons, to prove that *Moses* was most sincere in what he wrote, and that the Laws he delivered were inspir'd by God; Yet I shall only propose Three Principal Arguments, taken

I. From the Personal Qualifications of the Lawgiver:

II. From the Laws which he deliver'd.

III. From the Miracles which are related in his Books.

*Three Proofs
of the Truth of
the Books of
Moses.*

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The First P R O O F of the Books
of Moses,

*Taken from the Personal Qualifications
of this Prophet.*

IT is manifest from reading the *Pentateuch*, that *Moses*, among other good Qualities, had an extraordinary Frankness, Modesty and Impartiality, which are Vertues perfectly opposite to the Spirit of Imposture.

*The sincerity
of Moses.*

That we may the better judge of his Sincerity, let us compare a little the Manner in which this sacred Author wrote, with the profane Writers that followed after him in all Ages. There is nothing more common with these than to extol and magnify beyond Measure the glorious Actions of the great Men of their own Nation, to boast of their Merits and disguise their Faults. With what Praises did the *Pagans* not honour their first Benefactors and Hero's? They did not only exalt them above all Mankind, but they Deified them after their Death; they instituted Festivals and Sports in Honour of them? they erected Statues, they built Temples and Altars to them; they address'd Prayers, offer'd rich Presents, and in some Places sacrific'd even human Victims to them. If any one deliver'd

liver'd a Country from wild Beasts, or from Robbers that infested it, if he quell'd Monsters, chastis'd Tyrants, or discover'd to a rude People, some Arts necessary to human Life; If any one being advanc'd to sovereign Power, governed his Subjects with Equity and Justice, this was enough to procure him the Title of a Deity. But now let us see how our *Moses* wrote the History of *Abraham*, the Head of the *Israelites*; him to whom they ascribe all the Glory of their Original, and with what Sincerity he speaks of *Lot*, of *Isaac*, *Jacobi* and his Children. He gives an impartial Relation of the glorious Actions they did, without any *Hyperbole*; and of the great Faults they committed without any Disguise. He dissembles not the Envy and Murmuring of *Mary* his Sister, nor the abominable Idolatry of *Aaron* his Brother, tho' he was the High-Priest. He carries his Frankness yet further; for he discovers the damnable Doubts of his own Mind, which could be known only to God. Had he not so much command of himself, as not to reveal that which might blemish the Memory of the Ancestors, of the People whom he conducted, of his nearest Relations, and his own Fame also? It was in his Power to publish what was brave and commendable in their Conduct, and on the contrary to hide under the Veil of Silence, what was shameful and blameworthy. Who would have medled with him, who would have censur'd him for so doing? But nothing

could oblige him to feign or dissemble. The Truth he was order'd to set down, was the only Motive he proceeded upon, the Execution of God's Commands, the only Glory he sought after, and a happy Immortality the only Recompence he aspired to.

*The Modesty
of Moses.*

2. As to the Modesty of *Moses*, it appears to be no less unquestionable than his Sincerity; and of this, what I shall now relate is sufficient to convince us, if it be but duly consider'd. This holy Man, who was a Person of admirable Beauty, was educated from his Infancy until he was Forty Years old, in *Pharaoh's* Court, as a Son of the Royal Princess, and there is no doubt but he being a Person of that Quality, had very considerable Employments during that Time. If we may believe what is related by *Philo* and *Josephus*, who were Authors worthy of Credit in this Case, he commanded numerous Armies, and obtain'd Great Victories: And yet he is so far from the Vanity of Making any long Narrative of his own Preferments, of the Dignities to which he was advanc'd, and of the great Exploits he perform'd, which might procure him a great Name in the World, that he passes them all over in Silence; but on the contrary, he does not conceal his keeping the Flocks of his Father-in-Law *Jethro* in *Madian*. Now is this the Stile of an Historian who writes upon worldly Designs and selfish Motives. Let them

them shew me but one profane Writer, in whom the like Modesty appears.

3. I proceed now to shew *The diffin-
terestedness of
Moses.*
that *Moses* did not seek his own Interest. It is a common Thing, and that which is natural to Fathers, especially to those who are of a mild and debonnaire Humour, such as *Moses* was, to love their Children tenderly, to use all their Endeavours for advancing them, and settling them to the best Advantage. What King is not very desirous to transmit his Crown to his own Children, if it be possible for him? But he was so unconcern'd as to the Preferment of his Kindred, and so wholly possess'd with a Desire of executing the Commission he had received from Heaven, that this excellent Man settled the Office of High-Priest in the Family of his Brother; he made Choice of *Joshua* his Servant to conduct the People after him, and introduce them into the promised Land, and left not to his own Children any honourable Office or Prerogative, but that only of simple Levites. What can be inferr'd from such a Method of proceeding, but that *Moses* acted only by the Direction of God? If any one will but carefully reflect upon the Three Qualifications I have mentioned, he must be forc'd to acknowledge, that our Historian deserves an entire Credit. But I go on to urge further Proofs of this Assertion.

P R O O F Second, of the Truth of
the Books of *Moses*,*Taken from the Laws he enacted.*

IN the Prosecution of this Proof we must consider these Two things, 1st. The prodigious Inconvenience which these Laws brought upon those that were Subject to them. 2^{dy}. And particularly what some of these Laws prescrib'd unto them: Which Circumstances do plainly prove that there was no cheat design'd in this Case.

1. *The Inconveniences caus'd by the Laws of Moses.*

The Laws which he publish'd were mighty inconvenient both for their Number and their Rigor. They are divided into Moral, Political, and Ceremonial. Altho' the Decalogue contain but Ten of the First kind, yet many other of that sort may be referr'd to them. As to the Political and Ceremonial Laws, we cannot think of their almost innumerable Multitude, without being frighted. But what is most considerable, is, That the greatest part of these Laws were extremely burdensom and severe. What, for instance, is more harsh than the Circumcision of Infants on the Eighth Day after their Birth? The Pain it caus'd was so sensible and so dangerous, that *Sephora* the Wife of *Moses*, having by the Express Command of her Husband, circumcis'd her Son, (who was not circumcis'd at the Time appointed) when

when he was grown elder than was usual, and consequently was more capable of resisting the Operation, could not forbear to treat her Husband * as a Man of Blood, by throwing *Exod. 4. 25.* at his Feet the Foreskin she had cut off. Add to this Institution that rigorous Obligation, by which all Men were bound to offer, as often as they were order'd to do it, such Victims whereof some cost considerably, and to consecrate to God the First Fruits of the Ground, and the First Born of all their Beasts; some whereof were to be redeem'd which were forbidden to be sacrific'd. An infinite Number of things made them unclean, and put them under an indispensable Necessity of purifying themselves according to the Law. To gather on the Sabbath-Day a few small Sticks of Wood to make a Fire, was a Crime sufficient to deserve stoning to Death. I should perhaps be thought tedious if I should relate all the Things which they were oblig'd to observe under most rigorous Penalties: And therefore I shall only demand at present, whether it was not altogether Inconceivable, or rather morally impossible, that a People the most impatient, seditious, quarrelsome, stiff-neck'd, rebellious, that perhaps had ever been, to whom *Moses* never shew'd any complaisance, but treated them harshly, and often even punish'd them severely, should at last voluntarily submit to a multitude almost infinite of Observances so inconvenient,

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nient, so troublesom and so rigid, unless they had been Eye-Witnesses of the great Miracles related in the *Pentateuch*, since that was the only Means which could oblige a People so untractable, and stiff-necked, to receive and bear so heavy a Yoke. This is a Proof so evident, that whosoever contradicts it, must shut his Eyes against the clearest Light. I proceed now to the Examination of some particular Laws of *Moses*.

2. *Two remarkable Laws.*

There are Two Laws among others which very well deserve our serious Consideration. The First is that *Levit. 25. 10, &c.* which ordain'd that the Land should rest every Seventh Year, tho' he permitted every one to eat of that which it should produce of itself without Culture, and forbade them at the same time to make any Provision for that Year. And it is very remarkable, that this Law Commands the same thing as to the Year of Jubilee, which was the next after the *Sabbatical Year*, so that at that time the Land rested

Two Years successively. The Second remarkable Law * is that which enjoyns all the Males to appear, in the Place where the Tabernacle was to be, Three times a Year, viz. at the *Passover*, at *Pentecost*, and at the *Feast of Tabernacles*.

* *Exod. 23. 17. & 34. 23. Deut. 16. 16.*

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This being suppos'd, I demand, whether it can be imagin'd, That *Moses*, who according to the Infidels was a very learned Man, very prudent and a great Politician, who lov'd the People tenderly whom he govern'd, and who knew how to use all possible Precautions to preserve them, should ever think of appointing such Laws, if God had not absolutely commanded him to do it? Is there any Country in the World, how fruitful soever it be, tho' it were not half so much Peopled as anciently *Judea* was, that would suffer all the Land to rest every Seventh Year, and sometimes for Two Years together? Is there any State encompass'd on all Hands with powerful, valiant, and implacable Enemies, as the *Israelites* were, that would strip naked, 3 times a Year, all the Frontiers of all the Males from Twenty Years old and upward to Fifty or Sixty? Surely there is not any Nation, whose Sovereign would be so imprudent as to observe such a Conduct: And therefore it is not only incredible, but even morally impossible, that *Moses* should ever think of making such Laws, which would infallibly produce, in a very little time, the utter ruine of the Common-Wealth, according to the natural Course of things, unless God had given him an express Command to do so, and assur'd him, as he informs us, that the Land in the Years precedeing the *Sabbatical*, should produce a double and a triple Crop, and that during the time that Men were absent from their
Cities

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Cities, the Enemies should not attempt
to Conquer them. I do not see that any
thing can be objected against a Proof so
demonstrative as this is.

P R O O F Third of the Truth of
the Books of *Moses*,

*Taken from the Miracles that are related
in them.*

TO set this Proof in its full Light, I
design to do these Three Things.

1. I will relate some of the wonderful
Events we find in the Writings of
Moses.
2. I will discover the Nature of these
Events.
3. I will prove the Certainty of these
Events.

From these Three it will necessarily
follow, that the *Jewish Religion* was a Di-
vine Revelation.

1. *The Miracles of Moses.* As to the admirable Events
which are found in the *Pen-
tateuch*, I shall here set down
such of them as are most re-
markable. * *Moses* in the pre-
sence of *Pharaoh* and all his
Court cast down his Rod, and
immediately it was chang'd
into a Serpent. † He smote
the

the Water in the Rivers,
 and it was turn'd into *Exod. 10.
 Blood. * He stretch'd forth 22, 23.
 his Hands towards Heaven,
 and immediately a prodigious thick Dark-
 ness cover'd all the Land of Egypt for
 the Space of three Days, except only that
 Part of it where the *Israelites* dwelt, which
 was enlighten'd as it commonly was at
 other Times. † All the First-
 born of the *Egyptians* were † 12. 29.
 kill'd in one Night, accor-
 ding to the Prediction of *Moses*, and there
 was not one found dead in the Houses of
 the People of God. || The
 Red-Sea was divided in Two, || 14. 20, 21,
 by a Touch of *Moses's* Rod, 22.
 and the Children of *Israel*
 went thro' it upon dry Ground, by the
 Help of the cloudy Pillar, which gave
 Light to them, while it was Dark on the
 Side of their Enemies who
 pursu'd them. * The Sea be- * — 27, 28.
 ing smitten a Second Time
 by the same Rod, cover'd *Pharaoh* and
 all his Army with the Waters, so that
 not one of them escap'd.
 † For the Space of Forty * 16. 14, 15,
 Years, a nice Dew, such as
 they had never seen the like, fell from the
 Air, round about their Camp, constantly
 every Morning, except on the Sabbath-
 Day, and it never ceased to fall until they
 begun to eat the Fruits of the promis'd
 Land. || Some Persons ha-
 ving kept it till the Morrow || — 21.
 contrary

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contrary to the Command of *Moses*, it bred Worms, and
 * Ex. 16. 25. stunk, * which never happen'd
 † 17. 6. when it was gather'd for
 the *Sabbath*. † A Rock be-
 ing smitten with *Moses's* Rod,
 pour'd forth in an Instant, Abundance of
 Water, to quench the Thirst of all the
 People and their Flocks, in a dry Wil-
 derness, where there were no Springs or
 Rivers. || He did the same
 || Numb. 20. prodigious Feat elsewhere a
 11. Second time. * On the Day
 * Exod. 19. he had foretold that God
 16, &c. would give his Law on Mount
Sinai, there appear'd in the Morning up-
 on this Mount, in the View of all the
 People, a Show no less Terrible than Ma-
 jestick. A dark Cloud, a thick Smoke,
 such as comes out of a great Furnace,
 Lightning, Thunder, the loud Sound of a
 Trumpet, a great Quaking of the Moun-
 tain from the Top to the Bottom, were
 the magnificent Equipage, that accompa-
 nied the divine Presence, an Equipage
 which so terrified the *Israelites*, that they
 desir'd of *Moses*, that he should speak to
 them and not God. † A Pil-
 † Exod. 13. lar of a Cloud overshadow'd
 21, 22. 40. continually the Tabernacle in
 34, &c. the Day-Time, and appear'd
 Numb. 9. 15, all as Fire by Night:
 &c. || It never remov'd from above
 || Exod. 40. this Holy Place, but when
 36, 37, 38. the People were to March,
 and it never fail'd to return
 to

to its Place, to signifie that they must encamp. * The * Numb. 16. Earth open'd her Mouth to 32. swallow up *Dathan* and *Abiram* with their Families, their Tents, and those of *Core*, as *Moses* had foretold. † *Core* and his Company to the Number of 250, were † — 35. consum'd by a dreadful Fire, which God sent upon them. || A brazen Serpent being || 21. 9. lifted up upon a Pole, heal'd those Persons who look'd upon it, of the mortal Bites which the Fiery Serpents gave them. * 600000 Men above Twenty Years Old, who * 14. 29. &c. came out of *Egypt*, did all pe- 26. 64. 65. rish in the Desert, in the Space of Ten Years, except *Joshua* and *Caleb*, who had the Priviledge to enter into the Land of *Canaan*. † During this Time neither the Cloaths, † Deut. 29. 5. nor Shoes of the *Israelites* were grown old. Thus I have mention'd a Part of the wonderful Works, which are related to us in the History of the Lawgiver of the *Jews*; and now I proceed to examine their Nature.

That we may the better judge of it, we must shew how natural Causes may be discern'd from supernatural. That is call'd a Natural Cause, which acts according to the ordinary and fix'd Laws of Nature. As for Instance, it is by a Natural

2. The Nature of these Miracles.

Natural Cause, that a Body more heavy than the Air tends towards the Earth, and that the Soul moves the Members of the Body to which it is united, because all these Motions are according to the ordinary Course and Laws of Nature. But that must needs be a supernatural Cause, which has no Agreement with the Mechanism of Nature, which acts contrary to the settled Rule of its Laws, against the Experience of all Ages, and which exceeds the Powers of our Soul. Thus the Action of a Man who without any Machine should walk upon Water as upon Land, or who should raise himself very high up in the Air, would certainly be the Effect of a supernatural Cause, since 'tis evident they cannot be done according to the Laws of Nature. This being suppos'd, we may easily judge of the extraordinary Events I have related. The more narrowly any Man examines them, the more will he be convinc'd, that they are not Natural, since 'tis manifest they have no Agreement with the Laws and Mechanism of Nature, and do much transcend what we properly call its Powers. All that *Spinoza* and his Followers can say to the contrary, is good for nothing but to deceive the ignorant People, or rather those who wilfully seek to be blinded. The bare *Idea* of these Miracles is sufficient to refute their false and ridiculous Reasoning. Now if it be certain that they are supernatural, it is no less so, That they can
proceed

proceed from none but God, since they were all wrought to manifest his Glory, his Goodness and Justice, and to induce Men to believe and obey him.

3. Let us now see, whether we have not as much Reason to believe the Certainty of these Miracles, as the Impossibility that they should be done by natural Causes. I shall endeavour to demonstrate their Reality by Three Principal Arguments, Taken

3. of the
Certainty of
these Miracles.

1. From some Circumstances of these Miracles.

2. From the long Continuance of some of them.

3. From the Submission and Affection of the *Israelites* to the Laws of *Moses*.

1. I observe Three Principal Circumstances, as to these Miracles.

1. Circum-
stances of these
Miracles.

1. They are very numerous.

2. They are very particularly describ'd.

3. They are done in the Presence of an infinite Number of Witnesses.

1. The Number of the Miracles which we find in the Books of *Moses*, is little less wonderful than the Miracles

1. The Num-
ber of these
Miracles.

themselves. How many were the Plagues in *Egypt*! How many were the Prodiges in the Desert! It may be said without straining, That what happen'd to the

Israelites

192 Book III. *The Jewish and Christian Israelites* during the Government of their Lawgiver, was nothing but a Series and Chain of supernatural Wonders.

2. *These Miracles are Particularly describ'd.*

2. These Facts are related with particular Circumstances. They are express'd clearly without Equivocation. The Places are set down where they happen'd, and the Matters which were the Occasion of them.

3. *The Number and Quality of the Witnesses of these Miracles.*

3. The Third and principal Circumstance is the Multitude and Quality of the Persons who were Witnesses of them. They were not done in a Corner before a few Spectators, or in any secret Places; but in the famous Capital City of *Aegypt*, in the Palace of the King, before his Eyes and those of all his Court; they were done against him, his Family, and all his Subjects, in the Presence of an innumerable Company of Men and Women, of all the *Israelites* who saw them done with their own Eyes, and felt the Effects of them.

Now are not these plain and undeniable Proofs of the Certainty of the Miracles of *Moses*? If this Historian had been an Impostor, would he have had the Boldness to affirm, that God had done these wonderful works by his Ministry, and that he had done so great a Number of them? Would he have set down so many Circumstances, and appeal'd to an infinite Number

Number of People as Witnesses of what he affirm'd? Would not all these Circumstances have help'd to discover the more easily his Cheat? The more Facts he alledg'd, the more Particulars he related of them, the more easy it had been to convict him of a Falshood. If but one thing had been found false, this would have been sufficient to have blasted the Credit of all the rest. One that has a Mind to impose upon People, would scarce attempt to do Two or Three Jugling Tricks, and even these he would not venture upon but in an obscure Place, before a small Company of ignorant People, who were not capable of making any strict Enquiry into them: But *Moses* relates an infinite Number of astonishing Prodiges, which he says happen'd in the Presence of a great Prince, his Courtiers, his Philosophers, and his whole Nation, which was the most learned in that time; before the Eyes of all the *Israelites*, the most incredulous and intractable People, that perhaps were ever known. Now after all this, let any one Judge, whether it be conceivable or possible, that this Lawgiver should disguise the Truth, as to so great a Number of Events, whereof, as it appears, an infinite number of People had Cognizance. Certainly whosoever considers these Things well, will find no occasion to Doubt, but that his History deserves entire Credit.

Altho' it is not necessary to say any thing more, to persuade those who are Judicious Masters of Reason; yet I cannot

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not forbear to add here, that the Miracles which God wrought in *Egypt* were so Publick, so notorious and so certain, that the Pagans themselves preserv'd the Memory of them for a long time. *Justin* the Abbreviator of *Trogus*

* Book 35. *Pompeius* speaks of them plainly, * tho' in a Manner somewhat disguis'd. According to

† *Præpar. Evang. B. 9. Vid. Plin. B. 20. c. 1.* † *Eusebius*, the Philosopher *Numenius* made mention of the Magicians *Jannes* and *Jambres*, who oppos'd the Miracles which *Moses* wrought to punish the Malice and Hard-heartedness of *Pharaoh*; which agrees with the Tradition of

|| 1 Tim. 3.8. the *Jews*, and with what St. * Hæref. 18. *Paul* || relates of them. * St.

Epiphanius assures us, that in Commemoration of the Blood of the Paschal Lamb, which the *Israelites* sprinkled upon the Lintels and Posts of their Doors, to secure them from the Wrath of the Angel that destroy'd the First-Born, the *Egyptians* still continued the Custom of marking with Red, on the Evening before the full Moon in *March*, their Lands, Houses, Trees and Sheep, as it were on purpose to cover them from the Divine Vengeance.

2. The long Continuance of some of these Miracles

* Ex. 16. 35. † 40. 38. The Second Proof of the Miracles of *Moses*, is the long continuance of some of them. * The *Manna* fell for Forty Years. † The Pillar of the

the

Religion Reveald by. *Book II*

the Cloud and of Fire appear'd to them
all that time. There were also Miracles
of Institution which continued many Ages
after *Moses*. Every Sixth
Year the Land produc'd for
Two Years, and for Three
when it was the Year of
Jubilee. When the Jews
took their Cities to appeare in
the Place where the Tabernacle
was, their Enemies, as if
they were detain'd by invisible
Chains, made no Attempt to invade them in their
Absence. The Women that
were guilty of Adultery were
convicted of their Crime, by
the horrible Disease which the
Waters of Jealousy caus'd.
For many Years God gave
Oracles by the Urim and
Thummim, which were in the
Pectoral of the High Priest. Now can any
one after all this be so extravagant as to
doubt of the Sincerity of *Moses*? Can any
one imagine, that he should think fit to
establish such Customs as gave occasion to
these Miracles, if God had not expressly
commanded him, and promis'd that he
would then manifest his Power? If the
Events had been found contrary to what
he affirm'd they should be, this would have
afforded a fair Opportunity of discovering
the Imposture, of blackning his Memory,
and obliging a People naturally Rebelli-
ous to reject all his Laws. The

The Submission of the Israelites to the Laws of Moses, and the extraordinary affection which their Posterity have always testified for their Religion, is a Third evident

Proof of the Certainty of the Miracles related in his History. That we may the better perceive the force of this Argument, we must observe Three considerable Circumstances. The First is, the Manner in which their Lawgiver treats them. He objects to them every-where, without any abatement, and with all the Sharpness which they deserv'd, their Distrust, their Murmuring, their Ingratitude; their Gluttony, Incontinence and Infidelity; their abominable Idlatries; continual Relapses, and many other heinous Crimes. The Second is, the almost innumerable multitude of Ceremonies, and Precepts, which were so rigorous as to condemn a Man to Death for such Faults as appear'd to be but slight. The Third is, the impatient, haughty, untractable Humor of this brutish People, who were always ready for Rebellion. All this being well weigh'd, who can believe, that such a People should freely consent to receive from Moses, or from any Person, what soever a History that makes them so infamous, together with so many Laws, so inconvenient and so severe, if they had not been fully convinc'd by their own Eyes of the Truth of all the Facts contain'd in the

Pentateuch Can we attribute to any other Cause than the full Assurance they had of the Truth of their Religion, that extreme Contempt they shew'd of all foreign Nations, and that strong Affection their Posterity always testifi'd for their Laws? It is altogether inconceivable, that the Posterity of this People, who are not a whit inferior to them in Wickedness, should still observe and practise so superstitiously so many tedious Ceremonies, if their Forefathers, who were Spectators of all the supernatural Events which confirm'd the Institution of them, had not strongly inculcated the Truth of them, and by their positive and reiterated Assertions, render'd the Tradition so firm and constant, that it is still preserv'd to this Day after such a Manner as deserves Admiration.

Before I proceed to the Proofs of the *Christian* Religion, I cannot but observe here, that the Truth of the greatest Part of the Facts which *Moses* relates, is very plainly confirm'd by the most ancient *Papirs*. The History of their First Colonies, the Names of their States, of their Cities, nay the very Fables of their Gods, and the Ceremonies of their Religion, All this I say, is plainly taken in a great Measure from what we read in our sacred Writer, and some other Books of the Old Testament. The Treatises of many learned Men upon this Subject may be consulted, and among the rest that of *Idolatry* by *Vossius*, that of the *Syrian* Gods by *Selden*, *Origines sacra* by the most learn-

ned Doctor *Skillingfleet* Bishop of *Worcester*,
and the sacred *Geography* of the incompar-
able *Sinait* *Revelation*. Those that are capa-
ble of following this Study and are Lo-
vers of Antiquity will find a exceeding
great Pleasure in the Enquiry, and while
they satisfy their Curiosity, they will at the
same time be fully Convinced of the Cer-
tainty of the Grounds of the Jewish Religion;
will observe and praise its superfluity
to many tedious Ceremonies, if their Fore-

CHAP. III.

Of the Truth of Christianity.

If it be undeniable as I have already
observ'd, that the Reasons which prove
the Truth of the New Testament, do at
the same time establish the Certainty of
the Old, because the former is entirely
founded upon the latter, so on the other
Hand it may be safely affirm'd, that the
Demonstrations which convince us, that
the Old Testament was reveal'd by God,
do contribute very much to persuade us
that the New is from the same Original,
it being plainly impossible, that there
should be such a Concatenation of exact
Correspondence and agreement between
them, unless they both came from
the same Author. Whosoever will con-
sider attentively and without Prejudice the
Books of *Moses*, and the *Prophets*,
will find in them so many Predictions and
Types,

Types, which agree exactly to no Person, but him whom we acknowledge for the *Messias*, that he cannot but confess, If the Old Testament is true, the Gospel must be so also, since the one is as necessary a Consequence from the other, as a Conclusion from its Premises. But since the *Jews* as to this Matter are very strongly prejudic'd, and besides, the Proofs of *Christianity* appear to me to be more Sensible, more convincing, and consequently more capable of persuading *Infidels*, than those of *Judaism*, 'tis necessary that I should insist a little upon some of the Principal of them, that I may set the Truth of our Holy Religion in a clear Light, with full Evidence. I shall therefore only propose Three of them, which I shall take,

1. From the Doctrine of the Gospel.
2. From the Testimony of the Apostles of Jesus Christ.
3. From the Progress of Christianity.

But before I enter upon the Proposal of these Reasons, I believe it will be convenient to lay down certain preliminary Truths, which are as the Foundation of what I am to say.

1. The First Truth is, *1st. Truth.*
there was in former Times
Judea under the Reign
Tiberius, a Man nam'd
himself the *Messias* prom
tures, and who was cruc

Jesus had many Disciples, who among other Things, maintain'd boldly after his Death, that he had wrought many Miracles in their Presence, That he was risen from the Dead, and had ascended into Heaven Forty Days after he came forth out of the Grave. Whether these Witnesses testify'd the Truth or no, is not the Question here, for all that I pretend at present, is, That they publish'd the Facts I have mention'd, and of this the Establishment of the Christian Religion is an unanswerable Proof. But this is what the Enemies of the Gospel do not think fit to oppose.

2d. Truth, The Second Truth is, That the Book which we call the New Testament, contains the Doctrine which *Jesus* and his Disciples publish'd. The general and unanimous Consent of the primitive *Christians* in this Matter, leaves no Room for any one to doubt of it. If any one should be so whimsical, as to deny that the Works of *Plato* and *Aristotle*, for Instance, contain'd the Sentiments of these Philosophers, he would be look'd upon as a Madman, who deserv'd not to be regarded or answer'd. Now 'tis manifest that there is much less Reason to pretend That the Books of the *Evangelists* and *Apostles* do not teach the Doctrines and Concepts of *Christianity*, since all the ancient *Christians* drew from this Fountain alone, all that they preach'd and wrote of that Religion, and had always

a mighty Veneration and Affection for these sacred Writings. If there were any Disputes among them, they were not about this Matter, but about the Explication of certain Passages, whose Sense being variously understood, gave Occasion, or at least a Pretence, to the different Sects that arose.

The Third Truth is, That 3d. Truth. the Books of the New Testament, which have past at all Times and without any Contradiction, for the Books of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, St. John, S. Paul and St. Peter, are certainly the Works of these Sacred Authors: And of this many solid Reasons may be given. The First is, the constant and Universal Tradition of all Christians in this Case; for 'tis unconceivable that they should all agree in this Point, unless the Matter of Fact were publick and notorious. If Demosthenes, Cicero and Virgil, for Instance, have pass'd without Dispute for the Authors of these Treatises, which all Antiquity have constantly ascrib'd to them, who can reasonably doubt, but the Books which in all Times have been acknowledged by the whole Church, to be the Works of the Evangelists and Apostles whose Names they bear, were written by these Holy Doctors? The second Reason which proves this Truth, is the Love the Christians had for these Books, which they took to be of the greatest Concernment to them: For the Doctrine which they con-

contain'd being the only Rule of their Faith, the Ground of their Consolation and Hope, is it not Evident, that they would take extraordinary Care, to be exactly inform'd from whence they came to them, that they might not be deceiv'd in an Affair of so great Importance? What I affirm is so true, that it was impossible for Hereticks, and even for some Orthodox Christians, to cause many Supposititious Works to be receiv'd as Canonical, which they endeavour'd to introduce under the Names of the First Disciples of *Jesus Christ*. The Third Reason is, That there was nothing more easy than to be assur'd of the Original and Authority of these Writings, at the Beginning of Christianity, for the greatest Part of those who wrote them, liv'd so long that any one might know from themselves that they were the Authors; and after their Death, there were so many People every where, who had familiarly convers'd with them, and knew their Writing, that a Forgery in this Case appears to be altogether impracticable. The Churches to whom *St. Paul* wrote, and with whom he had conversed, could they in the least doubt, but the Epistles they had receiv'd in his Name were truly his? The Fourth Reason is, That the Enemies of the Christians in the First Ages never denied, that the Books of the New Testament belong'd to those to whom by the publick Vogue they were ascrib'd, *Julian* the Apostate himself, by the Report of *St. Cyprian*, grants

grants all this. The Originals which might convince any one, were * preserv'd long enough in the Churches where they were deposited. Lastly, I add to all these Reasons, that there appears so great a difference between the Canonical Books of the New Testament, and those that are Supposititious, that any one who is but a little vers'd in the Reading of the Former, cannot be deceiv'd by the Latter; Providence having so order'd it, that the difference should be palpable in this Case, so that the simplest People might discern it.

* Tertul.
Prescript. 10.
gainst Heret.

It may be objected perhaps, that there were some Christians who doubted of the Authors of some of our Sacred Books, as of the Epistle to the Hebrews, of the Second of St. Peter, of the Second and Third of St. John, of the Epistle of St. Jude, and of the Apocalypse. But to all this I answer, First, that the Doubt which some Churches made of these Books for Canonical, are a plain Proof that the other Writings which they receiv'd unanimously, were written by these holy Men whose Names they bear; for since both of them contain the same Doctrine, they would never reject some of them but for this Reason, that their Authors are unknown. I add but the Second Place, that the Scruples that were made about these particular Books, were afterwards remov'd, at least in a great Measure, by the Care and Industry that was us'd, to procure a good Account of their Original.

4. The Fourth Truth is, That there was never any considerable change made in these Books; which may be prov'd by many unanswerable Reasons. The First is, That the different Readings which are found in the most ancient *M. SS.* that are come down to our Time, are neither very numerous, nor of any great Moment. The Second is, That the Passages of Scripture, which are cited by the most ancient Fathers of the Church, in the Works which we have of theirs, differ in nothing, or at least in a few Things only, from the present *Greek* Copies. The Third is, That the Translations which were made into many Languages in the First Ages of Christianity, agree with the *Greek* Original which we now have in all Things considerable, and do not vary from it except in a few Places of small Consequence. The Fourth is, That the Hereticks who have pretended that our Scripture is corrupted, were never able to alledge any Proof of it, which they would never have fail'd to do if they had had any. I will add, That it does not only appear, that these Books were never falsified, but that 'tis even impossible that ever such a Falsification should happen. First, because the Christians had an exceeding great Love and Reverence for them, and look'd upon them as the Testament of their Heavenly Father, and as the only Rule of their Faith, and therefore would never have suffer'd them to be alter'd. Secondly, Be-

Account of their Original Cause

cause the Heresies which arose in the first Ages of Christianity, oblig'd the Orthodox to watch narrowly the Holy Scripture, lest the Hereticks should corrupt them to authorise their Errors. Lastly, Because the Faithful finding most sweet Consolation and solid Pleasure, in Reading and Meditating continually upon the New Testament, made an infinite Number of Copies and Versions of it, that so it might be put into the Hands of all Mankind: And this multiplicity of Copies, rendred any considerable Change which might be design'd, impossible to be made. I do not believe, that any one who duly weighs all these Reasons can be persuaded, that there happen'd any considerable Alteration in these sacred Books. Having thus premised these Truths, I proceed now to the First Proof of Christianity, taken from the Doctrine of Jesus Christ.

The First P R O O F,

Taken from the Doctrine of Jesus Christ.

THAT we may the better understand the Force and Evidence of this Proof, we must make some Reflexions upon the Birth and Education of Jesus Christ. His Genealogy which we find in St. Matthew and St. Luke, informs us, that he was descended of David. This is an unquestionable Truth;

I. Reflexions upon the Birth and Education of Jesus Christ.

for the Posterity of that illustrious King was so well known; that tho' some Error should happen as to the Posterity of the other Tribes, which the great care they took to preserve the Names of their Ancestors rendered very difficult, yet it was next to impossible, that any mistake should happen in the Genealogy of *Juda*, and chiefly as to the Royal Family, because the great hopes of all the People, were founded upon the glorious Coming of the *Messias*, who was to be born of it.

But as this Honour of *Christ's* being descended from so noble an Original is indisputable, so it cannot be deny'd on the other Hand, but his Family was extremely Poor. The Slavery to which his Predecessors were reduced who were transported into *Babylon* by *Nebuchodonosor*, and a long series of cross accidents, wherewith his Family was afflicted, rendered that Branch of which he came so Poor, that *Joseph* the Spouse of *Mary* his Mother, was forc'd to get his Livelihood by working at the Trade of a Carpenter in a wretched little Town of lower *Galilee*.

As to the Education of *Jesus Christ*, it appears that he was maintain'd and brought up in the Shop of *Joseph*, whose Trade he learn'd and practis'd until he was about Thirty Years old, when he began to exercise the Functions of his Ministry. The great Poverty of his Parents would not suffer them to maintain him in the famous City of *Jerusalem*, and to cause him

to be Instructed there, in the Sciences that were most esteem'd by the Jews. These are Circumstances so little honourable in the Eye of the World, and so contrary to the Idea which the Jews had generally of the *Messias*, that the Disciples of *Jesus*, would never have publish'd them, if they had not been known to all the World. And they are so far from being oppos'd by their Enemies, that they take occasion from them, to express their contempt of his Person and Religion. This being premis'd, I proceed to the Doctrine which *Jesus* taught.

That I may examine it methodically, I will consider it these Three Ways; with respect to God, with respect to Himself, and with respect to Men.

Those who have read the Books of *Moses*, and the Works which still remain of *Pagan* Authors, must grant, that this Doctor of the Jews spoke of God, after a manner incomparably more noble, and more sublime, than the most learned of the Idolatrous Philosophers. But how great and admirable soever he was upon that account, yet we may say, he spoke in this case but like a Child in comparison of *Jesus Christ*, and that he was as much Inferior to him in this Point, as he was Superior to the most Learned and the wisest of all the Heathens. To convince us of this Truth, we need only compare the Ideas which these Two Illustrious

Doctrine of
Jesus Christ
with respect to
God.

Law.

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Law-givers have given us of a Being infinitely perfect. The First represents him as dealing with the *Israelites* like Children, to whom he prescribes for employing them, and fixing their unstable Minds, a Prodigious Number of Ceremonies, much less agreeable to the Excellency of his Nature, than the Stupidity of those to whom he enjoyn'd them. The Second represents him as dealing with his New People, like Men made Rational, of whom he requires a Worship wholly Spiritual, worthy of his own Perfections, *The Hour cometh and now is, says he, when the true Worshipers shall worship the Father, in Spirit and in Truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth,* Joh. 4. 23, 24. In the Books of *Moses*, God ordain'd for the Expiation of Sins, the Sacrifices of Bulls, Rams and Goats, Victims of no Value, whose Death was altogether incapable of satisfying his own Justice, and redeeming the Criminals from the Penalties they had incurr'd. In the Gospel God appointed one most noble Sacrifice, whose Value was proportionable to the Dignity of his Person, and which was so sufficient a Satisfaction, that it could give the repenting Sinner an entire Confidence in the Divine Mercy. The God of the *Jews* is a terrible *Jehova*, who delivered his Laws with Lightning, Thunder, and Quaking of the Earth; the God of the *Christians* is a gracious Father, who delivers his Mind to Men as his

Chil-

Children and would have them to serve him without any slavish Fear, with a true Filial Freedom and Tenderneſs. In the *Old Teſtament* God pronounc'd a Curſe upon every one that did not exactly obſerve an infinite number of Ordinances, which the Natural Corruption of Mankind render'd altogether impoſſible to be done: In the *New* God requires only of our Weakneſs a ſincere Faith, which he promiſes to accompany with all the Aids of his Grace to render it fruitful in good Works. Under the *Law*, God confin'd the diſpenſing of his Favours within the narrow Bounds of one ſmall Nation, and he promis'd to his People, as a Reward of their Obedience, only Temporal Bleſſings, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, the early and latter Rain in its Seaſon, and his Protection againſt the *Heathens*: Under *Grace* all the Inhabitants of the World have the ſame Right to his Benefits, the Universe is his Temple, and he promiſes to his Faithful Servants to make them Triumph over all their Spiritual Enemies, to introduce them into a Heavenly *Canaan*, and to give himſelf to them, to be eternally an inexhauſtible Fountain of Pleaſure. In a Word, all that *Jeſus Chriſt* diſcovers to us of God, correſponds with the *Idea* which we ought to have, of his Goodneſs, Wiſdom, Power and all his other Attributes, and tends only to inſpire us with Thoughts of Admiration, Reverence, Humility, Thankfulneſs, Love and Confidence, with Re-
P ſpect

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spect to that Supreme Being. Let any
one now tell me, from whence this poor
Carpenter, who was not brought up at
the Feet of the Famous *Rabbins*, who
had never learn'd the Scriptures, as some
objected to him, could derive a Doctrine
so wonderful, a Doctrine which appears
to be much more agreeable to the Di-
vine Perfections, than even that of *Moses*
was, who had the Honour to converse
Face to Face with the Eternal God? A
Man brought up to the Age of Thirty
Years in the Obscurity of a sordid Shop,
in a wretched little Village, among a dull
and barbarous sort of People, Was such
an one capable of himself of framing the
most Sublime Conceptions of God? Let
any one judge of this impartially and with-
out Prejudice.

*The Doctrine
of J. Christ
with Respect to
his own Per-
son.*

2. If this Doctrine so sub-
lime discovers to us plainly,
That *Jesus* was inspir'd with
the Spirit of God, what he
said of his own Person does
no less evidently prove it. And that we
may the better judge of it, we must re-
count some Circumstances, which may give
great Light to this Truth. I shall only
mention Three. The First is, That *Jesus*,
as I have already said, was extremely poor,
and Liv'd in a very mean Condition; The
Second is, that altho' he was born and
brought up in a Country whose Inhabi-
tants were accounted very dull, it ap-
peared by all his Discourses that he had
much

much Judgment and Sharpness of Wit : The Third is, that he could not be ignorant of that which was the general Opinion of his own Nation, That the *Messias* was to be an illustrious Prince, a great Conqueror who should subdue all the People of the Earth to his Empire, and crown his Subjects with all the Glory and Happiness they could desire. Yet notwithstanding all this, he living in a very mean external Appearance, being reduc'd to a most urgent Necessity, not having so much as a Place where to lay his Head, being followed by Twelve poor Men of no Reputation, thought fit, tho' he was a Person of great Judgment, to call himself the *Messias*, i. e. him whom the Learn'd and Ignorant, the Great and Small, expected under the most glorious Appearance that can be imagin'd. He maintain'd, that he was the only Son, the well-belov'd Son of God, equal to God, with whom God was well-pleas'd : And that he might perfectly confound all the Notions of the *Jews*, he declares that he came into the World, to suffer a most cruel and shameful Death, and by that Death to satisfy Divine Justice for the Sins of all Mankind. And yet this is not all : For he was so far from flattering the People with the Hopes of that temporal Happiness which they expected from their great Prophet, that he promis'd to them who should believe in him, nothing but Misery, Persecution, Distress, and a Cross during this Life. What strange Doctrine

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was this ! Could he have propos'd any
thing more contrary to the Belief of the
Jews ? Let us make Two or Three Re-
flections upon it.

1. I observe in the First Place, It is al-
together incredible, if *Jesus* had not been
the *Christ*, the Son of God, that ever such
a Thought should have entred into his
Mind : Could his exquisite Judgment ever
suffer him to hope, that one in his mise-
rable Condition, should be able to per-
suade all the Nation, that he was that
Powerful, Victorious and Illustrious Deli-
verer promis'd by the Prophets, and ex-
pected for so long a Time with the great-
est Impatience ? Had he the least Rea-
son to imagine, that the *Jews* should re-
nounce their dearest Hopes, their flatter-
ing Prejudices, their Hatred, Covetous-
ness, Ambition, Sensuality and their Pride,
and be so simple and so credulous, as to
acquiesce blindly in what he should say,
and acknowledge that Person for their
Messias, who of all Mankind, according
to them, had the Characters most oppo-
site to him ?

2. But in the Second Place, supposing
that he, contrary to his Prudence, had
been capable of so prodigious a Madness,
could he doubt, but sooner or later, his
Imposture would be discover'd, either du-
ring his Life, if he did not answer the
Idea's and Hopes of all the People, or at least
after his Death, if he did not rise again
from the Dead, as he had foretold ; which
Two Things he could not but know were
equally impossible to him. Last-

Lastly, I remark, that if *Jesus* had been an Impostor, his whole Design would have been to procure himself a Name in the World, and to this purpose he should have fall'n in with the weak Side of the *Jews*, and flatter'd their Fancy, as the false *Messias*'s did who appear'd after him; he should very dextrously have made good use of the Good-Will, which so many Thousands as were sometimes assembled about him, testified for him. But he was so far from making any Advantage of these favourable Opportunities that were presented to him, that he fled, he hid himself, when the Multitude declar'd that they would make him their King. Why so! Is this the Behaviour of one, who must endeavour to persuade the People, that he was their Glorious Deliverer, promis'd by so many Predictions, who was to subdue all the Nations of the Earth under his Power? Certainly if *Jesus* had not been the *Christ*, it must be confess'd that he did not well understand his true Interest, and that if he had but a little common Sense, he could not have taken Measures more contrary to his great Designs. But since we can no wise doubt but that he was a Person of extraordinary Wit and Prudence, we must necessarily conclude from what he did and taught as to his own Person, That his Doctrine is true, and that he is the *Christ*, the Son of God promis'd in the Scriptures.

*The Doctrine
of J. Christ
with respect to
Men.*

Lastly, I say, That the Truths which *J. Christ* taught with respect to Men, and the Precepts he gave them, are convincing Testimonies of the Truth of his Mission. If this New Lawgiver, had been a false *Messias*, is it not manifest, as I have already said, that he should have been extremely complaisant to the *Jews*, complied with their Humor, and sooth'd them up in their Passions as well as in their Opinions. It requires no great depth of Politicks, to perceive that this was the surest way of Pleasing them, and making them his Followers. This was the way the Impostor *Mahomet* us'd, to insinuate dextrously into the Minds of his Hearers, when he begun to publish his Follies. But on the contrary, *Jesus Christ* did not only strenuously oppose the Notions which the *Jews* had of the *Messias*, but thundred and inveigh'd mightily against their gross Immoralities. Seeing those who appear'd to be most devout among them, imagin'd that Piety consisted in a fine outside, in observing some legal Ceremonies, he plainly declar'd to them, that God is not satisfy'd with such a Worship, that he would have such Worshipers as Worship him in Spirit and in Truth, and that if they would please him, they must love him with all their Heart, with all their Soul, with all their Mind, *i. e.* above all things else. They being blinded and puffed up with the great Advantages they had receiv'd from God, thought that those only of
their

their own Nation were their Neighbours, and that all other People deserved nothing but Contempt and Hatred: But he inform'd them, that all Men without Distinction are their Neighbours; and thereby he discovered to them, that there were no more any Strangers, to whom they were allow'd to lend upon Usury, no more any *Canaanites*, whom they might Destroy, or *Samaritans* with whom they should have no dealing. Because their Self-Love, which was extraordinary great, render'd them very sensible of Injuries, and consequently very revengeful, therefore he commands them above all Things to render Good for Evil, to love their Enemies, to bless those that Curse them, to pray for those that persecute them. For, says he, if ye forgive not Men their Offences, neither will God forgive you yours. He reprov'd sharply their Covetousness, and plainly told them, that it is impossible to serve God and Mammon at the same time: He goes yet further, and tells them that they ought not to take Care for the Morrow, that they ought to sell all that they had, and give it to the Poor. Seeing that their Incontinence made them abuse that Permission which Moses gave them of Divorcing their Wives, he informs them, that their frequent Divorces were no better than real Adulteries. He spares none of their disorderly Practices and Vices, but censures them with such a warmth and Sharpness as they deserv'd, and does not forbear to give them harsh and piquant

quant Language. Being mov'd with a Holy Indignation, he calls them *Hypocrites, whitened Sepulchres, Devourers of Widow's Houses, Fools, Blind, Serpents, Generation of Vipers, Adulterers, Children of the Devil, Murderers*. And as he did not spare their Vices so neither was he reserv'd as to the Judgments they deserv'd. He threatn'd the Cities of *Chorazin, Bethsaida* and *Caper-naum*, that they shall be more severely treated at the Day of Judgment than *Tyre, Sidon* and *Sodom*. He shew'd no Regard even to the famous City *Jerusalem*, nor the Temple of God; for notwithstanding it was generally believed by the *Jews*, that the *Messias* should make these Holy Places impregnable, and more magnificent than ever they had been, he foretold to them, that they should quickly be reduced to a sad Heap of Ruines. And to compleat their Aversion to him, he foretold that God was resolv'd to reject them, and substitute the *Gentiles* in all their Privileges. What strange Doctrine was this! How great was the Boldness! Could ever *Jesus* follow any Method more likely to alienate the Mind and Heart of the *Jews* from the Design he had, to make himself be acknowledg'd for their *Messias*.

But as the *Christian* Doctrine with Respect to the Person of its Author, appear'd extremely offensive to those of his own Nation, and was to them a Scandal; so it is manifest, that he did little better accommodate it to the Notions of the *Pagans*: For to preach to them, that
Jesus

Jesus, who was so poor a Man, of so mean a Condition, was the only Son, the well-beloved Son of God, equal to God, and that notwithstanding this incomparable Prerogative, he had suffer'd a most cruel and shameful Death, Was not this to preach to them the most offensive Doctrine in the World, which could not in all Human Probability but inspire them with a Contempt and Hatred of Christianity? This alone was sufficient to make the *Greek* and *Roman* Philosophers look upon the Gospel as the most extravagant of all Follies, unworthy of the least Notice by such as pretended to be learn'd and wise. The same may be said of the Moral Doctrine of *Jesus*; for it was so rigid, and so highly improv'd our Duty towards God, our Neighbour and ourselves, that this Austerity, together with the great Persecutions that attended the Profession of *Christianity*, could not but fright all such Persons from it, who were immers'd in soft Pleasures and shameful Debauchery. Let any one but seriously consider this extraordinary Conduct, and see if it can be reconcil'd with the Politicks of Impostors. If *Jesus* had been one of this Number, Is it conceivable, that he would have taken such Measures, which are altogether different from those which appear to be naturally most fit for such a Person, and which alone could procure him reputation, Honour and Riches, which are the great Advantages that are commonly pursued by Holy Cheats. But in stead of
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using this Method, and teaching nothing but what was proper to gain the Love and Goodwill of his own Nation and of the *Gentiles*, he preach'd such Doctrines as were directly contrary to the Opinions that were most deeply rooted in them, and gave such Precepts as were most opposite to their darling Lusts. What then ought or what can be concluded from so strange a Proceeding, but that this extraordinary Doctor did not act upon Human Motives, and that he preach'd without any Disguise, without any Byass, the pure Truth, as the Title of the True *Messias* indispensably oblig'd him to do.

Before I finish this Article, I will add Two Things which mightily confirm the Conclusion I have just now inferr'd. The First is, That *Jesus* did not only teach a Morality that was the most strict, the most reasonable, and the most excellent that can be conceiv'd; but in all his Words and Actions he gave us a perfect Pattern of Humility, Moderation, Patience, Temperance, Equity and all other Virtues, and with an unparallel'd Zeal made Use of all Occasions, and of every thing that happen'd to come before his Eyes, to persuade his Disciples, and all that heard him, to the Practice of Good Works. Now can any one in Conscience believe, that an Impostor could be so mightily concern'd, and take so much Care and inexpressible Pains for the Conversion of Sinners? That he could counterfeit to such a Degree, as to shew himself constantly in all his Beha-

Behaviour, a compleat Pattern of the greatest Perfections, without making any Advantage of this continual Dissimulation? This is a Thing that can never enter into the Mind of any Man that has the least grain of Reason.

The Second Thing which I observe is, That all the Discourses which *Jesus Christ* made upon any subject whatsoever, That all the Answers he gave to any one that ask'd him Questions, either to entrap him, or to learn something from him, were so pertinent, so proper, and of such a sublime Sense, that the most boasted *Apotheoms* of the Ancient *Pagans* are not any ways comparable to them. What I thus affirm is not at all *Hyperbolical*. All Persons of good Sense who read the History of him without Prejudice, will be oblig'd to agree with me: And yet the Author of these admirable Discourses, was not a *Socrates*, a *Plato*, or an *Aristotle*, educated in the City of *Athens*, in the School of the most refin'd Philosophy, and the most profound Sciences. I could repeat it an hundred Times over: He was a Carpenter, the Son of a Carpenter, brought up in a wretched little Village, in the midst of a Poor People, who had neither Learning nor Civility: Who then can believe after all this, that there was nothing Supernatural in this Man? Who can think that he should be able of himself to attain that Knowledge which is the most perfect and sublime in the whole World? But who would not rather cry out, *Never Man spoke*

220 Book III. *The Jewish and Christian spoke like this Man?* Surely if any one after a serious Consideration of what I have now represented, refuse to acknowledge *Jesus* to be the *Christ*, the Son of God, the Wickedness of his Heart must strangely obstruct the Light and Freedom of his Mind.

The Second P R O O F,
Taken from the Testimony which the Apostles gave of Jesus Christ.

I Shall now present you with the most evident and undeniable Demonstration that can be alledg'd to prove the Truth of Matters of Fact related in the Gospels: And to set this Subject in a true Light, and make the Reader sensible, as he should be, of the Solidity of it; I will consider,

1. What are the Matters of Fact which these Witnesses certified.
2. Of what Nature these Facts are.
3. The Proofs which render the Testimony of these Witnesses altogether worthy of Credit.

Matters of Fact related by the Apostles.

1. The Apostles testified, among an infinite Number of other wonderful Things, That *Jesus Christ* their Master changed a great Quantity of Water into Wine, That he fed to the full at one Time 5000 Men besides Women and Children, with Two Fishes and Five Loaves only, and that there was taken up of the Fragments that remain'd Twelve Baskets full,

see.

i. e. much more than there was of Bread at first; That at another Time he fed 4000 Men, besides a great Number of Women and Children, with a few small Fishes and Seven Loaves, whereof there remain'd Seven Baskets full; That he walk'd upon the Water, even while it was a great Wind; That at his Command the Tempest ceas'd, and the Sea became calm; That by his Word only, he made the Lamc and Paralytick to walk easily, he gave Sight to the Blind, and even to those who were born so; That he drove the Devils out of those that were possess'd with them; That he heal'd all Sorts of Diseases and Pains without any Medicines, and sometimes by the sick Person's touching only his Garment, and oftentimes in Places remote from him; That he rais'd the Dead after they were corrupted; and lastly, which exceeds all the rest, That he rais'd himself from the Dead, and after Forty Days ascended into Heaven, and that on the Day of *Pentecost* next following, he sent down upon the Apostles the Holy Spirit, by Virtue whereof they spoke all Sorts of Languages, and wrought all Sorts of Miracles. This is a Part of the Matters of Fact, of which the Disciples of *Jesus* positively testify'd, that they were Eye-witnesses: Let us now consider of what Nature these great Facts were.

2. And First I say, that it plainly appears, they were not little Tricks of Wit, or

2. *The Nature of these Facts.*

Slight

Slight of Hand, which may deceive the Eyes of the Vulgar; but that they were Actions very sensible and lasting, which requir'd no great Skill or close Attention, to know them perfectly, and consequently even the dullest People could not be deceiv'd in them.

I say in the Second Place, That it is no less evident, that the Facts I have related were not of the Number of those which are call'd Natural Effects. And to put this out of all Doubt, I need only call to Mind, the Rule I gave when I discoursed of the Miracles of *Moses*, to discern certainly what can be the Cause of these wonderful Effects. The Rule I gave was this: A Cause is then accounted Natural, when it acts according to the ordinary Course and fix'd Laws of Nature. For Instance, It is from a Natural Cause that a Body heavier than the Air descends towards the Earth, and that the Soul moves the Members of the body to which it is united, because all these Motions, are according to the Course and Laws of Nature: But that Cause must needs be Supernatural, which has no Agreement with the Mechanism of Nature, which acts contrary to the Course fix'd by its Laws, contrary to the Experience of all Ages, and which transcends the Powers of our Soul. Thus the Action of a Man that should walk upon the Water as upon dry Land, or that should raise himself high up into the Air, ought to be look'd upon as the certain Effect of a
Super-

Supernatural Cause, since 'tis plain, it could not be produc'd according to the fix'd Laws of Nature. And is it not evident, that the extraordinary Actions, which are attributed to *Jesus Christ*, such as I have related, cannot be referr'd to what they call Second Causes, and consequently ~~that~~ that they must proceed from a Supernatural Principle.

But that which should Force the most incredulous to acknowledge this Truth, is this, That *Jesus* did these Miracles by the sole act of his Will, by commanding the Devil and inanimate Things to obey him, knowing and foretelling often that he was going to do them, and that he communicated the same Power to his Disciples. But supposing it true, that Natural Causes are capable of producing such wonderful Effects, Is it not plainly impossible, that these Causes should always happen to meet together with the Occasions that offer, and the Will of *Jesus Christ*? What Connexion and Dependence can these Things have one upon another? How could it be divin'd so exactly, and for an infinite Number of Times, that Nature was going to bring forth Prodigies? Whence comes it to pass, that only he and his Disciples had this extraordinary Talent of foreseeing them? Is it not therefore most absurd to maintain, that so many miraculous Actions, are nothing but Natural Events? I can hardly be persuaded, that those who have
asserted

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asserted this Absurdity, were so senseless
as to believe it themselves.

But if these Works be Supernatural,
may some say, can they not proceed from
another Principle than God? Let us see
in a few Words what is the Truth in
this Case. The *Jews* who durst not deny
the Truth of the Matter of Fact, thought
fit to say in their *Talmud*, That *Jesus*
wrought them by the ineffable Virtue of
the true Name of *Jehova* which he had
found engraven upon a Stone in the Tem-
ple of *Solomon*, and which he transcrib'd
and hid in an Incision he made in the
Calf of his Leg. This Story is so chil-
dish and ridiculous, that I need not spend
Time in refuting it. Others, as the un-
believing *Jews* who liv'd in the Days of
Jesus Christ, and some *Pagan* Philosophers,
have pretended that he did these prodi-
gious Things by Magical Art. If they
understood by this, the Assistance of some
Evil Spirits; I answer, That all Crea-
tures being finite and consequently de-
pendent, 'tis plain they are not capable
of doing any thing without the Will or
Permission of God; and since this most
perfect Being is infinitely Wise and Good,
'tis no less evident, that these Perfections
will not permit him to grant the Power,
of doing such Supernatural Things to de-
ceive Mankind, who having no more
certain Means of discerning a Revelation
than Miracles, cannot be justly con-
demn'd for having embrac'd a Religion,
authoriz'd by the strongest and most in-
vincible

vincible Proof of this kind that can be desir'd. I add, that the Devils not being able to act but only in Favour of Falshood and Vice, 'tis altogether absurd, to attribute to them the Actions of *Jesus Christ*, whose whole Conduct tended to suppress Error and Vice, to advance the Glory of God, and procure the Eternal Happiness of Men. It is therefore altogether unquestionable that these mighty Works are Supernatural, and that evil Spirits could not be the Causes of them; from whence we must necessarily conclude; that none but God is capable of producing them, and if we can clearly prove that these Miracles were really done, we shall at the same time prove that the *Christian* Religion is also true. Now to demonstrate the Certainty of these Miracles, which is the great Question, I must make it appear, that the Apostles, who have given Testimony to them, are most worthy of Credit, and consequently deserve to be fully believ'd.

3. To put this Truth beyond all Question, I shall make use of Four or Five Reasons, which appear to me unanswerable.

Proofs of these Facts.

1. The First is, That the Apostles were a poor, simple, dull and ignorant Sort of People, born and brought up in a Country little better than barbarous, having no

1. *The Qualities of the Apostles, their Poverty, Simplicity and Ignorance in human Sciences.*

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Assistance

Assistance from, nor any Commerce with the civiliz'd and refin'd Parts of the World, which Circumstances are inconsistent with those Qualifications that are necessary to those that would form and execute a Design of Planting a new Doctrine; if they had been Impostors: For who knows not that such Persons, as I have represented the Disciples of Christ to be, have in all Times been much addicted to the Religion they suck'd in with their Mother's Milk, that they are Enemies to all Innovations that any one would make in it, and consequently altogether incapable of designing and undertaking to extirpate it. But as the Common People have been always and every-where of this Temper; so it may be asserted for a certain Truth, that there never were any more devoted to the Ceremonies and Worship of their Country than the *Jews*, who did all firmly believe, that God himself dictated their Laws to *Moses*. Now this being suppos'd, what Probability is there that the Apostles would renounce *Judaism* in which they had been educated, and which they knew to be of Divine Institution, to substitute in its Room such Doctrines as seem'd to be directly contrary to it, unless they had been forc'd to do it, by the Evidence of the Miracles which they saw done by their Master. Surely it is altogether inconceivable, that without such an irresistible Proof as this, these poor ignorant People, who were as much or more fond of a Temporal *Messiah* than

than the most learned of their own Nation, should ever undertake to persuade their Doctors, and their Priests, That this *Jesus* whom they had Crucified, was the great Deliverer whom they expected, and to make the *Pagan* Philosophers believe, that a Man so mean, and who had suffer'd such a shameful Death, was the Son of God who deserv'd Adoration, and in Honour of whom they ought to overturn the Altars, Statues and Temples of all their Gods. What then can we conclude from their proceeding, but that they were perfectly assur'd of these Matters of Fact which they preach'd, and that otherwise they would never have entertain'd the least Thought of Preaching *Christianity*, and founding it upon the Ruines of other Religions, and especially of their own, for which they had conceiv'd from their Infancy a mighty Veneration.

The Second Reason which 2. *Their Timorousness.*
proves the Veracity of the Apostles, Is their great Timorousness, which is a Quality very ordinary with poor People of a mean Condition, and of a Profession quite different from that of Arms. To make it appear how little their Courage was, we need only consider, what they did when *Jesus* was betray'd by *Judas* in the Garden of *Gethsemane*. Notwithstanding what he had foretold of their Weakness, notwithstanding the Assurances they had given of
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their inviolable Constancy, as soon as they saw him in the Hands of his Enemies, they were seiz'd with a Consternation, they abandon'd him, and all of them cowardly fled away. *Peter*, that zealous Disciple, who was in Appearance the boldest of them all, who had promis'd him so positively that he would accompany him, even to Prison, nay even to Death, deny'd him Thrice with an Oath, at the Voice of an inconsiderable Fellow, and a silly Maid, from whom he could fear nothing. Could they give any stronger or more infamous Signs of Cowardice than these? Now supposing at present, that *Jesus* did continue in the Sepulchre, and that his Disciples were thereby convinc'd that he was an Impostor, from whom they could hope for nothing but Contempt, Shame and Misery, I ask, whether it be in the least credible, that People so timorous as they were, should become all on a sudden, so bold, so fearless, so rash, as not only to form unanimously a strange and dangerous Design, of maintaining that their Master was risen again from the Dead, and that they had seen him ascend up into Heaven; but also to continue after his Death at *Jerusalem*, where they had Enemies so powerful, so inveterate against them, and very numerous, and, which is yet more surprising, to begin their Preaching in this famous City, where it was so easy to convict them of Falshood: And yet this they did, in that very Place they preach'd, even at
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the Time of the first solemn Feast which follow'd after the Death of their Master: What a strange way of Proceeding is here! But what could they pretend for a Conduct so extraordinary, and so prodigious a Conceit? Nothing else but that they had a Mind to be accounted Fools and Madmen, and to expose themselves to the most troublesome Persecutions, and the most shameful Deaths. Let any one reflect without Prejudice upon this wonderful way of Management, and I am sure he must grant that 'tis impossible, but these Witnesses must be convinc'd of all they said of *Jesus Christ*.

3. The third Reason which plainly proves the Veracity of the Apostles, is the Manner in which they spoke of the mean Condition of their *Hero*, of his human Infirmities, and their own Faults. They relate ingenuously, that *Jesus Christ* was a Carpenter, the Son of a Carpenter, and that he had his Subsistence by the Charity of some good Souls, who assisted him with their Riches. They make him say of himself, *that the Foxes have Holes and the Birds of the Air have Nests, but that he had not a Place where to lay his Head*. They do not dissemble, but that a little before he was betray'd, he fell into an unexpressible Agony, that his Soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto Death; That his Agony, i. e. the Struggle which he felt within himself in that Moment when he was to be deliver'd

ver'd up to the *Jews*, was so terrible, that the Pores of his Body were open'd in an extraordinary Manner, so that the Blood came forth with the Sweat, and that in so great Abundance that it trickl'd down in Drops to the Ground. Lastly, they add, that when he was ready to expire, he utter'd these doleful Words, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Why all this! Is this the Style of Flattering Historians, who please themselves with disguising the Truth? If the *Evangelists* had had a Mind to have made *Jesus Christ* a Hero, according to the common Opinion of the World; If they had written with a Politick Design, would they ever have mention'd his mean Trade, and his great Poverty? Could they be ignorant that such a despicable Profession, and such extreme Necessity to which he was reduc'd, could only expose him to Contempt? But especially did they not know, that these apparent Weaknesses they mention, which were only known to themselves, would in all Human Probability give his Enemies a disadvantageous Opinion of their Master's Courage? Can any one imagine a Management more contrary to the Interests and usual Methods of Impostors.

But if these Writers shew so much Frankness, in speaking of *Jesus Christ*; they discover it no less in declaring their own Faults. They relate without Disguise the Rebukes that were given them, Of being a People of little Faith, Of being

ing Stupid and without Understanding, &c. They confess without mincing the Matter, the horrible Cowardice they all discover'd, in forsaking him when he was betray'd by *Judas*. They relate candidly the bloody Rebuke he gave to *St. Peter*, when he call'd him *Satan*, and the abominable Crime of that Disciple, who at the Voice of Two inconsiderable Persons deny'd his good Master Three Times, after he had promis'd him with so much Assurance, that he would be faithful even unto Death. They discover to us without any Byass the boundless Ambition of *James* and *John* the Sons of *Zebedee*, and the Difference which happen'd between *Barnabas* and *Paul*, about a Matter which appears not to us to be of any great Importance. This latter informs the *Galatians* ch. 2. of the Epistle he wrote to them, that he withstood *Peter* to his Face, and reprov'd him sharply for his too great Compliance with the Jews. So great is the Sincerity of that Apostle of the *Gentiles*, that he accuses himself highly of having been a cruel Persecutor, and of being the greatest of Sinners. He is not ashamed to own, that God had afflicted him with a Thorn in the Flesh that was extremely mortifying, a Messenger of *Satan* that was sent to buffet him. I appeal to any one's Conscience, If these Writers had been Impostors, would they ever have discover'd such Secrets, as might do them a great Prejudice in the World, and give their Adversaries

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versaries so great an Advantage over them ?
If therefore it plainly appears, that no
Human Consideration could oblige them
to feign, and that the Truth was dearer
to them than their own Reputation, how
can it be doubted but that all which they
have written is exactly true ?

4. *Their Pro-
bity.*

4. The Fourth Reason which
ought to convince us of their
Veracity, is their great Pro-
bity. For discerning this we need only
read their Works with some Attention
and without Prejudice, and in them it
will plainly appear that throughout there
is an extraordinary Zeal for the Glory of
God, and the Salvation of all Mankind.
They are such mortal Enemies to Flattery,
that they spare no Body, and no sort of
vicious Persons escapes their Censure;
nay they excuse not even the most con-
siderable Churches, when any Fault is
committed in them, which dishonours the
Profession which they make of the Faith
which is in *Jesus Christ*. But when they
condemn the Crime with an holy Zeal,
at the same Time they exhort to the
Practice of all Vertues, in so compassio-
nate and *Pathetical* a Manner that 'tis
easy to perceive, that what they preach'd
did really proceed from their Heart. Let
any one say what he pleases, this cer-
tainly is not the Language of Impos-
tors. Tho' they were never so cunning,
they could not always counterfeit so na-
turally, but sometimes in spite of all their
Precau-

Precaution, some Expressions would escape them, which might discover the Blackness of their Soul. I beseech the *Infidels* to read chiefly the Epistles of *St. Paul* carefully and without Prejudice, if it be possible for them to do it, and then to ask themselves, after this Reading, what they should think of the Faith of this Apostle? If the Warmth wherewith he expresses himself, the Transports of Zeal which he shews in so many Places, If that lively Faith which inspires him, and the Contempt he discovers for the Pleasures and Riches of this World, If the Persecutions and inconceivable Labours he

* endur'd, and the extraordinary Pains he took to discharge the Office of his Ministry with Success, If all this do not persuade them that he was a *Christian* in good earnest, there is nothing so evident but they may doubt of it, and it would only be a Loss of Time and Pains to reason further with those that make so bad use of their Reason. And if they cannot but acknowledge, that *St. Paul* sincerely believ'd what he taught, then they must necessarily grant that *St. Paul* was a good Man, and that the other Disciples of *Jesus*, whose Piety he boasts of from the certain Knowledge he had of their Behaviour, were, as well as he, of a blameless and exemplary Life.

* Cor. 11, 23, 24, &c.

But the Sacred Scriptures do not only furnish us with undeniable Testimonies of their Probity; but the Zeal, the Disin-

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Disinterestedness, the Patience, and other
Vertues which appear'd in their *Profelytes*,
those dear Children whom they had be-
gotten to *Christ Jesus*, are also an illu-
strious Proof of it. And in speaking to
this, I shall, First, confirm the Matter of
Fact, *viz.* That those who embrac'd *Chri-*
stianity by the Ministry of the Apostles,
and the other Disciples of our Lord, li-
ved very regularly according to the Pre-
cepts of the Gospel; and then I shall
draw the Consequence that naturally re-
sults from it.

We learn from the Book of the *Acts*,
That the primitive Faithful were of one
Heart and of one Soul, that all the Goods
they possess'd were common among them;
That they assisted one another mutually
in all their Necessities with a wonderful
Zeal, That they shew'd a truly Brotherly
Affection to one another; That they spar'd
neither their Care nor Labour, nor Ri-
ches, to procure the Relief and Safety of
all Men, whom they look'd upon as their
Neighbours without any Distinction,
&c.

This wonderful Piety is confirm'd to
us by some Works which still remain of
the primitive Fathers of the Church. The
Epistle which St. *Clement* Bishop of *Rome*
wrote to the Church of *Corinth*, about
Forty Years after the Death of *Jesus Christ*,
deserves in the First Place to be read.
There we see such Authentical Testimo-
nies of the Zeal and Charity of the Faith-
ful in that City, and of the other *Chri-*
stians

stians in that Time, that no Body can reasonably doubt of it. Many Pagans themselves who scoff'd at their Religion, yet could not forbear to do them Justice in that Respect. See how *Lucian* speaks of them in his History of the Death of *Peregrinus*. Our *Protheus* (*Peregrinus*) being seiz'd upon the Account of his * new Doctrine, this Disgrace contributed * The Christian Religion. very much to his Glory, and help'd to advance his Credit:

For upon this News the Christians, who accounted his particular Misfortune their publick Calamity, mov'd Heaven and Earth, and left no Stone unturn'd, to set him at Liberty; and when they saw that they were not able to compass their Design, they did him all imaginable good Offices to mitigate his Grief. Immediately after break of Day there were seen at the Gate of the Prison, a Multitude of old Women, of Widows and Orphans, and the chief among them spent the Night with him after they had brib'd the Gaoler. There they feasted themselves, and there they celebrated their Mysteries; and there came Deputies from the Churches of Asia to testify their Compassion for him, and offer him their Assistance: For it is incredible what Care and Pains they take upon these Occasions, sparing nothing to relieve one another in their Wants: They sent to him Silver from all Parts under this Pretence, which was to him a great Revenue. In a Word these miserable Creatures despise all things, and even Death itself for the Hopes of Immortality, and voluntarily offer themselves to Torments. For their First
Law-

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Lawgiver made them believe that they were
all Brethren, after they renounc'd our Religion,
and that in worshipping a Crucif'd Man they
live according to his Laws: Wherefore they
despise all Things, and believe that all Things
are common, receiving his Doctrines with an
implicite Faith. Could the Christians de-
fire of such an Enemy as *Lucian* was, a
Testimony that was more to their Ad-
vantage? I shall also relate upon this Oc-
casion a Passage of *Pliny* the Younger,
who by the Command of *Trajan* made an
exact Enquiry into the Faith and Man-
ners of the *Christians*, in the Province of
Bithynia whereof he was Governour. In
the Answer he made to this Emperour,
he acquaints him, that having ask'd with
Threats those who were brought before
him, they protested that all their Crime,
or all their Error consisted in This, That
they were wont to meet by Night on a cer-
tain Day, to sing together a Hymn to Christ
as God, to oblige themselves to do no Crime,
not to commit Theft, Robbery, or Adultery,
to deceive no Man, not to deny a Deposi-
tum in a Court of Judicature. He adds
afterwards, that to inform himself fur-
ther of the Truth, he had caused Two
Women Servants who pass'd for Deaco-
nesses to be put to the Torture, and
could discover nothing by their Confession, but
that they were guilty of a strange and exces-
sive Superstition. This Author calls *Chri-*
stianity by this Name, because it was
perfectly contrary to the Idolatry, and all
the Worship of the Pagans.

These

These are Testimonies, I Think, as undeniable as can be desir'd, to convince any one, that the *Profelytes* of the First Ambassadors of the Gospel, were Persons of extraordinary Vertue: From whence we must conclude that their Masters who taught them, and with whom they convers'd familiarly at all Times, were perfect Patterns of an incomparable Piety. *Tell me with whom you converse,* said one Day the wisest of all the *Greek* Philosophers to a certain Person, *and I will tell you what you are.* A wicked Man, tho' he be never so cunning a Hypocrite, cannot so exactly counterfeit, as to deceive always the whole World, but sometimes either by his Words or Actions he will discover the true Sentiments of his Heart. Thus if the Apostles had not been honest Men, and had preferr'd their own Interest and Pleasure to the Glory of God, it was impossible but they should sometimes discover their bad Inclinations, and that in spite of the secret Motion of their Passions they should speak and act always as Saints, and after such a Manner, as was necessary to make the *Christians*, by their Example, as Vertuous and Zealous as their first Disciples were. It must therefore be granted that the first Preachers of *Christianity* were of a blameless Behaviour: And this being suppos'd, which is unquestionable, it will necessarily follow from thence, That they were very sincere, and that their Testimony cannot be rejected without the greatest Injustice.

5. *Their Con-
stancy.*

5. The Fifth and Last Reason which proves the Veracity of the Apostles after an invincible Manner, and which cannot be resisted by the most obstinate Opiniator, is the unshaken Constancy which they shew'd continually in their Testimony. Notwithstanding the frightful Menaces of the *Jews*, in spite of the eminent Dangers to which they saw themselves expos'd, and the terrible innumerable Difficulties, which were presented to their View, they form'd the great Design of opposing and destroying *Judaism* and *Paganism*. They proclaim'd aloud every-where That this *Jesus*, who was Crucifi'd at *Jerusalem*, was risen again from the Dead, That they had seen him many Times after his Resurrection, That he was Ascended into Heaven, That he was the Son of God, the *Messias* promis'd in the Scriptures. They maintain'd with unshaken Constancy, That they were Eye-Witnesses of these great Events, and to give an undeniable Proof of the Truth of their Testimony, they endur'd the most cruel Reproaches, the most horrible Contempt, Banishment, Poverty, Imprisonment, the most frightful Deaths, and nothing could make them retract what they had affirmed. They were not only Two or Three who shew'd such a wonderful Courage, the Twelve Apostles, and a great Number of Disciples who had known *Jesus Christ*, were endow'd with the same Spirit of Power and Constancy. Having divided
the

the whole World among them, to plant every-where the Cross, and to subdue it to their Master, they went to the remotest Countries to publish the Gospel with an equal Resolution; and in spite of the inconceivable Obstacles they met with every-where, they executed their Commission with an unparallel'd Intrepidity and Patience. Neither Gibbets, nor Funeral Piles, nor Scaffolds, nor any thing that was most dreadful to Human Nature could fright them, or draw from their Mouth the least Complaint, and the least Denial of what they had testify'd.

Now I ask, if there be any Occasion to doubt of the Truth of the Testimonies of these Witnesses? and if any one can persuade himself, that they should be so senseless, so wicked, as to form a Design of introducing over all the Earth, against their own Conscience, the Belief of a ridiculous Lye, from which they could not promise themselves any thing but Shame, Misery, Persecution during this Life, and Eternal Torments after their Death? Is it conceivable that they should carry their foolish and mad Fancy so far, as to suffer the most horrible Tortures for the Sake of one Crucify'd who had deceiv'd them, and from whom they could expect nothing but dreadful Misfortunes, to which they were almost every-where expos'd where they durst shew themselves? If the Apostles were Men of perfect Probity, as I have already prov'd, it would be altogether unjust and absurd to accuse them

them of such an Imposture: If, on the contrary they were wicked Men, it would be no less unreasonable to imagine, that they would deprive themselves of all the Pleasures of this World, and incur the Contempt and Hatred of the principal Men of their own Nation, and indeed of all Mankind; in a Word, that they should render themselves the most miserable of all Men, for the Sake of an Impostor, who by his Death was become utterly incapable of relieving them, or making them any Amends. Let our Infidels consult themselves to know, whether they be capable of such an extravagant Madness.

1st. Object. But some perhaps will say, the Apostles did not undertake to publish this new Doctrine, but only upon the Account, that they flattered themselves to be applauded by all the World, to make their Fortunes, or to acquire a great Reputation. To this I answer, that it is plainly impossible they should have any such Thought, since they knew that the Gospel was altogether contrary to the Prejudices of the *Jews* and *Pagans*, and directly thwarted the Opinions generally receiv'd. Besides, their Master had frequently forewarn'd them of what was to befall them; and they themselves preach'd nothing to their Auditors, but that all sorts of Miseries and Persecutions would attend those who should embrace the Gospel: But supposing they had

had been capable of promising from their Sermons a great Happiness in this World; yet the Experience they had to the contrary would quickly have disabus'd them, and forc'd them to go speedily to some Place of Refuge, where they might find Rest in the Bottom of some unknown Retirement.

The only Evasion which a 2d. object: Captious and impudent Wit can suggest to *Infidels*, against this invincible Proof, taken from the Sufferings and Martyrdom of the Apostles, and the other primitive Disciples of *Jesus Christ*, is to deny with a brazen Face the Matter of Fact, how notorious and undeniable soever it be. Altho' this Subterfuge is groundless and deserves no Answer; yet since the Thing itself is of great Importance, I will alledge Four or Five Reasons which shall put it out of all Doubt.

The First is founded upon 1st. Answer: a Truth generally acknowledged, which is this, That these Witnesses of *Jesus Christ* went to preach everywhere after his Death, That they saw him work almost an infinite Number of Miracles, That after he was Crucified by the *Jews* he rose again on the Third Day, That they had seen and touch'd him many Times after his Resurrection, and that Forty Days after he came out of the Sepulchre, he ascended into Heaven in their
R Presence

Presence. It can no wise be doubted but they publish'd these great Events: For if they had not done it, but had kept Silence, how could Christianity be spread almost over all the World in a very small Time? Suppose then, as it cannot be deny'd, that they did preach the Gospel to all the People they could come at, 'tis evident that they could not be ignorant, that by so doing they brought upon themselves Contempt, Hatred and most bloody Persecutions, both from the *Jews* and *Pagans*, who had Sentiments perfectly opposite to this Doctrine; and therefore they ought necessarily to put on a firm Resolution to suffer the greatest Extremities in the Execution of their Design. Thus tho' their Preaching does not directly prove their Sufferings and Martyrdom, yet it proves at least clearly, that they must be prepar'd for them, since they had all the Reason in the World to expect them; and this is of the same Force and as concluding, as a positive Proof of their Martyrdom itself.

2d. Answer.

The Second Reason, which renders unquestionable all the Miseries and Torments that the first Preachers of the Gospel endur'd for confirming the Truth of their Testimony, is this, That they themselves have affirm'd it in the Books which they have left us. St. *Luke* informs us in the *Acts* of the Apostles, that they had no sooner commenc'd the publick Exercise of their Mi-

Ministry, than the *Jews* being enrag'd at their Boldness put them in Prison, and condemn'd them to be whipt; and That this unworthy Treatment, was so far from afflicting them or stopping their Mouth, that it fill'd them with ineffable Joy, and serv'd only to redouble their Zeal and Courage. The same Author writes, that St. *Stephen* having preach'd the Gospel at *Jerusalem* with much Freedom, was apprehended, and carried before the Council of the *Jews*, and that there he accus'd them of Impiety and Hardness of Heart with so much Zeal and Vehemence, that they being transported with Rage, caus'd him to be ston'd; which cruel Death he endur'd with extraordinary Constancy and Piety. He adds afterwards, that *James* the Brother of *John* was Beheaded by the Commandment of *Herod*, and that this Prince was just ready to treat *Peter* after the same Manner, when God miraculously deliver'd him out of Prison. In fine he relates in the same Book, that after the Martyrdom of St. *Steven*, there arose a great Persecution against the Church of *Jerusalem*, and that *Saul* who had given his Consent to the Death of the First Martyr, entred into all Houses, and dragg'd Men and Women to Prison: But that this furious Persecutor, being converted by a Miracle of Grace, as he was going to *Damascus*, there to exercise his Cruelty against the Faithful, became himself afterwards the Object of the Hatred and Rage of the Enemies of the

244 Book III. *The Jewish and Christian Christian Religion.* Since S. Luke accompanied him in the greatest Part of his Travels for the Propagation of the Faith, he was a Witness of some Part of the Persecutions which the Preaching of the Gospel brought upon him. St. Paul himself speaks of them, and glories in them in many Places of his Epistles. In *ch. 11.* of the Second Epistle to the *Corinthians*, he gives us a long Catalogue of his Labours and Sufferings, which very well deserves our serious Consideration. *Five times*, says he, *receiv'd I of the Jews Forty Stripes save one; Three Times was I beaten with Rods, once was I ston'd; Three Times I suffer'd Shipwreck; a Night and a Day I was in the Deep; in Journeying often, in Perils by Water, in Perils of Robbers, in Perils by mine own Countrymen, in Perils by the Heathen, in Perils in the City, in Perils in the Wilderness, in Perils in the Sea, in Perils among false Brethren. In Weariness and Painfulness, in Watchings often, in Hunger and Thirst, in Fastings often, in Cold and Nakedness, besides those Things which are without, that which cometh upon me daily the Care of all the Churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not? In the Fourth ch. of his Second Ep. to Timothy, See how he speaks to his belov'd Disciple, at a Time when he was ready to suffer Martyrdom by the Order of Nero. And now I am ready to be offer'd, and the Time of my Departure is at Hand. I have fought a good Fight, I have finish'd my Course, I have kept the Faith. Henceforth there*

there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give me at that Day. In a Word, all the Holy Scriptures are full of the Miseries and Persecutions which the *Christians* were to suffer, and which they did really suffer every Day for publishing their Doctrine. Now Two Reasons may be sufficient to remove all Doubt of what is deliver'd by these Holy Men to this Purpose. The First is, That there appears in all their Discourses, and in all their Behaviour, so much Zeal, so much Probity, so much Frankness that we cannot without Injustice refuse them that Credit which these Qualities deserve. The Second which can never be answer'd, is this, That if they had not been persecuted, and their Sufferings and their Courage had not been certainly and publickly known, they never durst have affirm'd such Things, since the Discovery of a Falshood of this Nature, which was unavoidable, would have perfectly ruin'd their Reputation. Their Enemies who were continually upon the Watch, to surprise them, and render them odious to all the World, would never have fail'd to make their Advantage of a Lye so Gross and so Publick.

3. But the Infidels are so far from accusing them of disguising the Truth in this Case, that their own Histories afford us sufficient Proof of the Persecutions that were every-where

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rais'd against the Disciples of *Jesus Christ*;
and this is my Third Reason to confirm
this Matter of Fact. *Josephus* in his Hi-
story of the Wars of the Jews makes
mention of the Death of the Apostle
St. *James*, which St. *Luke* relates in the
XII. Ch. of the *Acts*. *Tacitus* in Book 15
of his *Annals* writes, that *Nero* put the
Christians to divers kinds of Death. At
first, says he, those were seiz'd who confess'd
themselves to be of that Religion; and after-
wards by their Discovery, a great Number of
others, who were not convicted so much of
the Crime of being Incendiaries, as of the
hatred of Mankind. They were insulted also
at their Death, by covering them with Beasts
Skins to make the Dogs devour them, or by
fastning them to a Cross, where they were
burnt, after they were rubb'd over with Pitch,
that they might serve to give Light in the
Night-time. *Suetonius* in the Life of this
Emperor, says the same thing with *Taci-*
tus. *Pliny* the younger in the Letter a-
bove-mention'd, relates, That when the
People were brought before him who
were accus'd of being Christians, it was
usual to ask them first, Whether they
were of that Religion, and that when
they confess'd it, he ask'd them again
twice, threatening them with Death for it;
after which, when they were inflexible,
he sent them away to the Place of Exe-
cution: For I believ'd, says he, that what-
ever their Sentiments were, their invincible Ob-
stinacy deserv'd to be punish'd. He adds a
little lower a Thing very remarkable,
where

where he assures us, *That nothing could force those who were truly Christians to renounce Jesus Christ, to invoke the Gods, and offer up Incense and Wine to their Statues, and the Image of the Emperor. Lucian in his History of Peregrinus, which I have cited above, writes; that the Christians despis'd Death, and voluntarily offer'd themselves to Torments. Lastly, Celsus, Porphyrie and Julian, who wrote such inveterate Books against the Christian Religion, never denied the Martyrdom of our Witnesses which they would never have fail'd to do, if they had had the least ground for it: But these were Facts so notoriously and publickly known, that it had been absurd to dispute them, and therefore they were so far from calling in Question the Sufferings of the primitive Faithful, that on the contrary they took Occasion from them to disparage the Gospel, and render it odious to all the World.*

4. The Fourth Reason 4th. Answer.
which proves, that the Apostles and other Disciples of *J. Christ* were persecuted every-where, and that the greatest Part of them shed their Blood to maintain the Truth of the Gospel, is the universal Tradition of the Primitive Church as to this Matter. It was a thing known to all the Faithful, that the Twelve Apostles suffer'd Martyrdom, except *St. John* who died a Natural Death. All the World knows also, that the greatest part of the

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other Heralds of Christianity, who had been
Witnesses of the Miracles of *Jesus Christ*, or
of those of his Disciples, suffer'd the same
Treatment, with a Constancy worthy of
the Cause which they defended.

5th. Answer,

5. Lastly, The last Reason
which confirms a Fact so un-
deniable, and which will serve me for a
Third Proof of the Truth of the Gospel,
is the wonderful Success of the preaching
of the First Ministers of Christianity.
This great Event proves two Things
with the clearest Evidence. One is, that
their Life and Behaviour was blameless;
and the other is, that they endur'd con-
rageously the cruel Persecutions, which
the rage of their Enemies stirr'd up every-
where against them. For is it not plain,
that if the Witnesses of the Lord *Jesus*
had been guilty of any Scandalous Vices,
had they been govern'd by Ambition, A-
varice, or the Love of sensual Pleasures,
or had they refus'd to seal their Testimo-
ny with their Blood, when the cruelty of
their Persecutors condemn'd them to the
greatest Torments; They would have lost
their Reputation by that means, and their
Enemies needed no more to convict them
of an Imposture?

After all that I have said, can it now
be deny'd that those who accompanied
Jesus Christ, while he discharg'd the Office
of his Ministry, who were present at his
Working of Miracles, who had seen him
many times after his Resurrection, and be-
fore

fore he ascended into Heaven, did not suffer extremity of Pain and Misery in Defence of their Testimony. And if it be undoubted, that they carried their Constancy to such a Pitch, and that none of them did ever retract what he had preach'd, can any one Question their Sincerity, or reject a Testimony, which hath all possible Marks of the most perfect Certainty.

Tho' the Infidels cannot *Object. 3d.* deny, that the Apostles Seal'd their Testimony of *Jesus Christ* with their own Blood; yet they endeavour to weaken the Consequence we draw from thence to confirm the Christian Religion, by objecting to us, That many Instances may be produc'd of Persons who have suffer'd Death for false Opinions, and that therefore it cannot be inferr'd from the Sufferings of our Martyrs, that the Testimony they have given is true. This pitiful Sophistry is so Ridiculous, and the absurdity of it is so apparent, that I can hardly believe the Libertines are in good earnest when they propose it. To satisfy them that nothing is more groundless than this Objection, let them only consider the different Motives which prevail'd upon our Witnesses, and those whom they oppose to them, to suffer a painful Death. The former lost their Life, for maintaining the Truth of an infinite Number of Facts, which they had clearly perceiv'd with their own Eyes, *which they had distinctly*

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stinctly heard with their own Ears, which they
had touch'd and handled with their own Hands,
1 Joh. 1. 1. Now I ask if it be conceivable or possible, that they should be deceiv'd in so great a Number of Things, which requir'd nothing but the Use of their Senses to judge aright of them? And if any one refuse to give Credit to their Testimony, what can he believe upon the Report of another? But as to those Persons mention'd in the Objection, who died for maintaining false Opinions, the Case is quite different. All the World knows that there is nothing more easy or more common, than to be mistaken in Opinions: For Interest, Education, Ignorance or some other such-like Cause, produce such Prejudices, as blind the Mind, and hinder it from Reasoning aright: And therefore the Obstinacy of some conceited People, will conclude nothing in Favour of their own Imaginations, nor against the Testimony of the Apostles, who by their unshaken Constancy deserv'd that an entire Credit should be given to the Things they testify'd. But there is so great and manifest a Disparity in this Comparison, that 'tis no wise necessary, I should insist upon it any longer. I proceed therefore to my Third Proof.

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The Third P R O O F,
*Taken from the great Progress of the
Gospel.*

TO make the Reader sensible of the Solidity of this Demonstration, it will be necessary,

1. To confirm the Matter of Fact, that the Gospel had such a wonderful Success.
2. To reflect upon the Sentiments of the *Jews* and *Pagans*, about Religion, about the Corruption of Manners, and about the Hatred they bore to *Christians*.
3. To consider on the other Hand the Doctrines and Morality of the *Christian* Religion.
4. Lastly, To enquire into the Qualities of those who were the first Preachers of *Christianity*, and the Means they made use of to establish it.

From these Four Observations it will plainly follow, that Christianity could never have made so great a Progress if it had not been founded on undeniable Proofs.

1. It requires but a very moderate Knowledge of Ecclesiastical History, for any one to know, that in a little Time after the Disciples of *Jesus Christ* had

1. The Preaching of the Gospel had great Success.

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had begun to preach the Gospel, *Christianity* spread itself with a wonderful swiftness thro' all *Judea*, thro' all the *Roman Empire*, and even to the most distant Places. *St. Luke* informs us in *ch. 2.* of the *Acts* of the Apostles, that the first Sermon of *St. Peter*, being supported with that astonishing Miracle of the Gift of Tongues, converted about 3000 Persons. In *ch. 3.* he speaks of 5000 *Profelytes*. In the following Part of that History he relates some Part of the other wonderful Progress of the *Christian Religion* by the Miracles and Discourses of the Apostles, and particularly of *St. Paul*, whom he accompanied in many of his Travels. The *Epistles* of that illustrious Servant of God, make it appear that there were in his Time a great Number of considerable Churches in *Asia minor*, in *Greece*, and at *Rome* itself the Seat of the Empire. The *Epistles* of *St. James*, *St. Peter*, and the *Apocalypse* confirm the same Thing. I will not here relate all that the Fathers of the Church have said upon that Subject. I shall only remark, that *Tertullian*, who flourish'd at the End of the Second Century and the Beginning of the Third, affirms in his Book against the *Jews* and in his *Apology*, That *Christianity* was propagated even to the remotest Nations, and that the Cities and Country-Villages, the Palace of the Emperour, the Senate, the Armies, and the whole Empire were fill'd with *Christians*.

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Profane Authors agree in this with our own. *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* inform us, that in *Nero's* Time there was a great Number of *Christians* at *Rome*. But what *Pliny* the Younger writes to *Trajan* in the Letter above-cited, is very well worthy of our Observation, which is, That the *Christian* Religion was spread, not only in the Cities, but in the Burroughs and Villages, That the Temples were become almost Desarts, That the Service of the Gods had been a long Time abandon'd, and That there was scarce any Body that offer'd them Sacrifices. But what need is there to insist any longer upon an Event so well known, and so unquestionable? I proceed therefore to my Second Consideration, concerning the Sentiments of the *Jews* and *Pagans* about Religion, the Corruption of their Manners, and their bitter Zeal against the *Christians*.

2. I have already observ'd, that the *Jews* believ'd, among other Things, that their *Messias* was to be a powerful Prince

sent from God, to give them a glorious Deliverance from the Yoke of their Oppressors, and to subject all Nations to their Empire, whom he was to make as illustrious and as happy as can be imagin'd. They were so far from suspecting that he would abolish the Ceremonies of the *Mosaic* Law, that they were strongly perswaded he would

2. The Sentiments of the *Jews* and *Pagans*, about Religion, the Corruption of their Manners, and their bitter Zeal against the *Christians*.

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would maintain them with all his Power, and that they should continue to the End of the World. Lastly, they had so prodigious a Contempt for the *Pagans*, and such an overweening Esteem for their own Nation, that they could never think that God would reject his own ancient People, to put the *Uncircumcis'd* in their room.

As to their Morality, The Books of the New Testament inform us, that this People was generally very corrupt. The most considerable among them, even the High-Priests themselves, were *Saducees*, i. e. true *Epicureans*, who deny'd the Immortality of the Soul, and according to that Principle liv'd in most shameful Enormities: The other Party, who for their Pride were call'd *Pharisees*, i. e. such as separated themselves, affected an Air of Mortification and Devotion; but in Effect they were nothing but Hypocrites, who plac'd the Essentials of Religion in certain childish Practices, which were in a great Measure of their own Invention, and which God did not at all require of them. If any one would have an undeniable Proof of the scandalous Vices, whereof our sacred Writers accuse them, let him read what *Josephus* an unexceptionable Historian says in this Case, and he will wonder at the Things he relates of them:

I shall not here give a long Representation of the *Pagan* Religion. I have already observ'd that their *Theology* consist-
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ed only in a Hotch-Potch of absurd Fables, and that their Worship was as Gross, as Extravagant and Infamous, as the Deities to which they paid it. On the other side, their Manners were no more reasonable than their Superstitions. Let any one judge of them all, by the *Romans*, who were the most learn'd and most civiliz'd of all Nations at that Time: And if any one will but read *Salust*, *Juvenal*, and the other Authors who have describ'd their Immoralities, he will quickly be convinc'd that Vice appear'd among them barefac'd, and that Vertue was scarce accounted any thing but a mere empty Name. The Philosophy of *Epicurus* was follow'd at *Rome*, as it was at *Athens*, by the greatest Part of Rich Men and Persons of Quality, and the Wisdom of a *Socrates*, or a *Cato*, serv'd only as a Mask to some Hypocrite, or an Amusement to some Man-Hater. In fine, it may be affirm'd of *Jews* and *Gentiles* without any straining, that they did almost equally abandon themselves to the same dissolute Courses, and that, as *St. Paul* says, both the one and the other were the Children of Wrath, who deserv'd to be wholly forsaken by God.

The Hatred which all these People testify'd against the *Christian* Religion, was as great as their Depravation of Manners. Every Body knows the cruel Persecution which the Faithful suffer'd in the First Ages of the Church: For the Emperors being excited by the Enemies of these

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these poor People, or push'd on ~~by~~ by their own blind Zeal, us'd their strongest Efforts to extirpate them utterly. Those who boasted so much of being the peculiar People of God, were so far from being less cruel than the Idolaters in this Case, that they would doubtless have exceeded them, if they had had the same Power. 'Tis very well known, how furiously they fell upon the Apostles, and the other Disciples of Jesus, and how in the Places where they did not bear Rule, they stirr'd up the *Gentiles* against them; and how they join'd with these *Infidels* to compass their Ruine by Concert: And indeed both the one and the other being transported with Fury, against a Doctrine that oppos'd their Prejudices and Lusts, left no Stone unturn'd to hinder its Progress. This Matter of Fact being equally attested by *Ecclesiastical* and *Pagan* Writers, I shall no longer insist upon it, but proceed to my Third Consideration concerning the Doctrines and the Morality of *Christianity*.

3. *The Doctrines and Morality of the Christian Religion.*

3. I have already observ'd, that the *Jews* expected a *Messias*, whose Kingdom was of this World, who triumphing over all their Enemies by a Thousand illustrious Victories, should make them absolute Lords of the Universe, and give them all that Abundance of good Things, which their own Hearts could desire. But what a *Messias* was offer'd to them?

them? A Man without Form, without any external Appearance, one that was born of poor Parents, brought up in a Village scarce known, among a rude People, to a mean Trade; one that was oppress'd with Misery and Injustice, and who after he was loaded with most shameful Calumnies ended his Life by the most infamous and cruel of all Deaths. But this is not all, for they were told, That Circumcision, the Seal of the Love of God towards *Abraham*, which distinguish'd them from the greatest Part of the Idolatrous Nations, signified nothing, and that no more did all the other Ceremonial Laws of *Moses*, which were to them so dear, and which they believed were to continue for ever; That all their strict Observances were of no Value before God, and that they could only be sav'd by Faith in *Jesus Christ*. Lastly, they were plainly told, That the *Gentiles* these accursed Nations, were not only to be admitted to a Participation of the Privileges of the New Covenant, but were also to be substituted in their Room; and that by their Exclusion, the other should become the chosen People, and the Holy Nation. Good God, What a *Messias* was this! What Doctrine was here for these proud *Jews*! Was it possible to imagine any thing that could more excite their Aversion? Could their pretended Wise Men believe, that God was the Author of a Religion so contrary to their Notions, and that he would authorise it by any Miracle?

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The Morality of the Gospel did not appear to them less offensive than its Doctrines. They expected a *Messias* who should be a temporal King, and should procure them a Thousand Pleasures; But *Jesus* whom they were taught to be their *Messias*, tells them, that if any will follow him, they must forsake their Houses, Lands, Friends, Father and Mother, Husband or Wife and Children; That they must renounce the World, their darling Lusts, and even part with their own Life, if these Things were any Hindrance to the Profession of the Gospel: He requires that they should not only forbear revenging themselves upon their Enemies, but that they should heartily forgive them, love them, pray for them, and do them good. He promises to those that would embrace his Doctrine, nothing but Misery, Contempt, Reproach, Crosses and Torments during this Life, all which they must suffer for the Hopes of obtaining after Death (in Lieu of the Riches and Pleasures of this World which they must renounce,) a Happiness wholly Spiritual, of which they could only have a faint *Idea*. What Precepts, what Promises, were these for such as were truly *Epicureans*, for Hypocrites, for such as were Proud, Covetous, Revengeful, Voluptuous, and who were wholly guided by Sense!

As to the *Pagans*, they having heard nothing of a *Messias*, could not consequently, upon that Account, have the same Prejudices as the *Jews*; but nevertheless

theless they were upon other Accounts no less contrary to *Christ*, with Respect to the Characters of his Person: For if any one declared to them, that God had an only Son who was cloath'd with our Nature in the Womb of a Virgin by the Operation of the Holy Spirit, that he was made subject to our Infirmities and Miseries, and that after he had endur'd a great many Troubles, he suffer'd Death upon a Cross, to satisfy Divine Justice in our stead, and to redeem us by the Price of his Blood from the Eternal Torments we had justly deserved; This was to tell them, that which was to them the strangest Thing in the World, and was most likely to disgust them. The Doctrine of the Resurrection of our Bodies, and some others which are taught in the Gospel, would appear to them no less surprising.

As to the Morality of *Jesus Christ*, 'tis easy to conceive, that a People who had such imperfect Notions of Vertue, and were for the most Part dissolv'd in the Softness of sensual Pleasures, were not fitly dispos'd to follow such rigid and mortifying Precepts as those of *Christianity*, which were propos'd to them, by such-like People, as the First Preachers of the Gospel. I come now to the Qualities of these Preachers, and the Means they employ'd for planting the Religion of their Master, which shall be the subject of my last Reflection.

4. *The Qualities of the first Preachers of the Gospel, and the Means they made use of to plant it.*

4. These Heralds of the Gospel, were they eloquent Orators, perfect Masters of the Art of Reasoning and Persuasion? Were they Philosophers well-skill'd in the Secrets of Nature and in sublime *Metaphysical* Speculations? Were they vers'd in the abstracted Questions of *Mathematicks*? Were they Men illustrious either for their Birth, or their Riches, or Dignities? Nothing less: They were, as I have already observ'd, Fishermen, *Publicans*, born and brought up for the most Part in a very rude Country, who had neither Riches, Genteelness, nor Skill in Human Sciences, but were without Credit, and without Authority, despis'd and persecuted every-where.

But what Means did they use for planting the Gospel in the World? What I have just now said, proves that it was not by the Help of *Rhetorick*, or Human Sciences, since they had not the least Tincture of them. Neither was it by their large Gifts, nor by their Credit, nor by the Dignity of their Employments, nor by the Force of Arms, since they were utterly incapable of Proceeding after this Manner. What Ways then did they take, to oblige so many Persons, who are naturally so indispos'd for it, to become *Christians*? Their Weakness, their Patience, their Probity, and chiefly their Constancy, which they discover'd in their greatest

greatest Sufferings, were the powerful and innocent Arms they employ'd for reducing so many People to the Obedience of *Christ*. But it must be confess'd, that how effectual soever such Motives might be, they would not have been sufficient to persuade so quickly so many Nations strongly prejudic'd, if they had not been supported by the irresistible Force of Miracles. This is what I shall now demonstrate in a few Words, by the Consequence which necessarily results from the Four Considerations I have laid down: Which I thus deduce.

If the Doctrine of the Gospel was perfectly contrary to the strongest Prejudices of the *Jews* and *Pagans*; If its Morality was no less opposite to their Lusts, than its Doctrines repugnant to their Notions; If Poverty, Contempt, Sufferings, the most cruel Persecutions, were the common Lot of those who embrac'd this new Religion; If those who were the First Preachers of it, were neither Orators nor Philosophers, nor fine Wits as they are commonly call'd *beaux Esprits*, nor considerable any wise for their Birth, Riches, or Interest; And if notwithstanding, in spite of all these disadvantageous Circumstances, they persuaded so great a Number of People, of all Countries, and of all Conditions, who had Opinions and Inclinations so contrary to *Christianity*, of the Truth of what they said, Then it must of Necessity follow, that they were forc'd to believe their Doctrine by an Evidence

so clear that it left no Room for doubting: Now all these Suppositions are unquestionable, and therefore it is absolutely necessary, that the Preaching of the Gospel was attended with such Proofs, as oblig'd all those who seriously consider'd them to assent to it. But what could these Proofs be, which so convincingly persuaded the *Jews* and *Pagans*, notwithstanding all that might hinder their Conversion? Certainly the more one thinks upon it, the more Reason he will see to believe, That if the Apostles had not supported their Probity, Courage, and the Truth of what they said, by the Evidence of many undeniable Miracles, it had been impossible for them to overcome the prodigious Prejudices of so many People, who had an almost invincible Antipathy against the *Christian* Religion, and to inspire their *Profelytes* with so much Zeal and Constancy for a Doctrine, to which they had formerly so strong an Aversion.

I shall propose the Case of *St. Paul* as an Instance, which will very much confirm the Truth of what I say. We learn from *St. Luke* in the *Acts*, and from himself in his *Epistles*, That he was very zealous for the Law of his Fathers, That he hated Mortally the *Christian* Religion and all those who profess'd it, and persecuted them with the greatest Cruelty: And yet this Jew so violent, this Persecutor so furious, became the most zealous Disciple of him whom he look'd upon as an Impostor; he

he became the most celebrated Herald of his Doctrines, and Morality; he expos'd himself to the most imminent Dangers; he endur'd with Patience, and even with Joy, the greatest Extremities, the most terrible Persecutions, that he might persuade all Mankind of the Truth of those Doctrines which he had oppos'd with all his Might. What a Change was here! Now I ask, if it be credible, that this Man could in any human Probability be chang'd all on a sudden from one extreme to another, with Respect to that which was most important and most difficult to him, unless it were by a great Miracle, such as St. *Luke* and himself informs us of. In troth he must be very obstinate who will not yield to this wonderful and extraordinary Change. Let the *Libertines* then turn their Thoughts to which side they will, Let them search as much as they please into the *Labyrinth* of their Subterfuges, they can never find any Way to escape the Difficulties, with which they are embarrass'd by what I have now said; they can never devise the least probable Reason to persuade any judicious Person, that *Christianity* owes its prodigious Success to Human Motives, since they were all directly contrary to it. It must necessarily therefore be acknowledg'd, (which I will repeat again) That the Preaching of the Apostles was supported by unanswerable Demonstrations, which left no Room to doubt of the Truth, viz. By the clearest Evidence of Mira-

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cles, which remov'd all the Difficulties
that oppos'd the Belief of *Christianity*, and
forc'd all those to embrace it, who from
a sincere Desire of knowing the Truth,
carefully examin'd the wonderful Things
which they saw and heard: For it is no
wise conceivable, nor so much as possible,
that an infinite Number of Rational Men,
of all Countries and Conditions, should
renounce the Religion of their Forefa-
thers, which they had suck'd in with
their Mothers Milk; should abandon their
Friends, Relations, Riches, and all that
was most dear to them in this World;
That they should expose themselves to
the most dreadful Miseries, the most
bloody Persecutions, and the most cruel
Deaths, for serving and adoring as God a
poor Crucifi'd Man, who was preach'd
to them by rude and ignorant Fisher-
Men, if they had not been fully con-
vinc'd by a great Number of undeniable
Miracles.

Objection. What I have now said,
and what I have else-where
related, of the Means that *Mahomet*
made Use of for Planting his Religion,
is a solid Confutation of that Objection,
which may be deduc'd from its great Pro-
gress in Opposition to that of the Gos-
pel. Nevertheless, that I may leave no
Room for cavilling about this Matter,
I will now utterly remove this Difficulty
after a more sensible Manner, by com-
paring together some of the Circumstances
that

that attended the Planting of these Two Religions, and Setting them one against another. First then I observe,

That *Jesus Christ*, was born *Answer.*
in a very mean Condition,

he liv'd in extreme Necessity, he foretold that he should be Crucified, and notwithstanding that, he assum'd the Title of the *Messias*, the Son of God, and made himself equal to God: On the contrary *Mahomet* was exceeding rich by the Goods he had with his Wife, he appear'd in the World with Splendor, and he only call'd himself the Ambassador of God. *Jesus Christ* did not accommodate himself to the Prejudices of the *Jews* and *Pagans*, and he preach'd without any colloguing such Doctrines as were directly opposite to their most beloved Errors: *Mahomet*, the better to gain the *Jews* and *Christians*, accommodated himself to their Religion, and took from it what he judg'd most proper for his Design. The Morality of the Gospel is extremely rigid, and more especially it advances Chastity to the highest Degree of Perfection, and expressly forbids Divorce, except in the Case of Adultery: But the Maxims of the Inventor of the *Alcoran* are exceeding loose in this Case, for he knowing by * his own Experience;

That the Love of Women is the most predominant Passion of the greatest Part of Mankind, and chiefly of those who live in a hot Country,
such

* He had Seven Wives, and Hali his chief Disciple had no fewer than Fourteen.

such as *Arabia* is where he publish'd his Extravagances, he permitted all those who should be his Disciples, to marry many Wives, and to take besides as many Slaves for Concubines as every one was able to maintain. He granted also the Liberty of Divorce, to give the voluptuous the Pleasure of Change. And that he might gratify even to Excess, the brutish Lust of his Followers, he promis'd them a Paradise wherein they should enjoy the most beautiful Women, and the most exquisite Dainties they could desire, for assuaging their Lust and Gluttony. *Jesus Christ* foretold to his Apostles and to all those that should embrace his Religion, That they should suffer the cruellest Persecutions, and he commanded them to oppose their Enemies with nothing but Patience, and to employ for the Conversion of People no other Means, but only the mildest Ways of Persuasion: *Mahomet* on the contrary commanded his Followers to make Use of Fire and Sword, to force the Unbelievers to embrace his Doctrines. The Disciples of *Jesus Christ*, according to the Commands they had receiv'd, in all their Behaviour set a wonderful Pattern of Vertue and Moderation: They are the true Lambs, who for the Glory of God, and the Advancement of *Christianity*, suffer'd with a wonderful Constancy and Joy the most virulent Calumnies, the most bloody Persecutions, the most terrible Deaths; and who were so far from flattering their
Pro-

Profelytes, that they told them, that they must endure the same Treatment: The Followers of *Mahomet*, according to the Example and Maxims of their Master, breath'd nothing but Blood and Slaughter; and there is not one to be found of the first Ministers of that Impostor, who attested by the least Suffering, That he had seen him do any Miraculous Action. In fine the Gospel was preach'd to the *Jews*, to the *Greeks* and *Romans*, the most civiliz'd and knowing People in the World, and that at such a Time, when Learning flourish'd with the greatest Lustre: But the *Alcoran* was preach'd to the *Arabs*, a rude, sensual, thievish and bloody Sort of People, who had scarce any Notion of a Deity, or of Justice, and were incapable of discerning an Imposture from Truth. I might add here many considerable Differences, which are to be found in the Circumstances that accompanied the Planting of *Christianity* and *Mahometism*: But those I have already observ'd are sufficient to make it clearly appear, That these Two Religions owe their Success to quite contrary Motives, and that from the Propagation of the latter, nothing can be concluded, against what I have inferr'd from the same Reason in Favour of the former.

Give me leave here before I proceed, to the Conclusion of this Treatise to put a Question to the *Infidels* upon their Refusal to embrace the *Christian* Religion. I ask of them, if they believe that there was

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was formerly a *Roman* Emperor call'd *Julius Caesar*, who after he had been for some Years a Governor for the *Romans* in *Gaul*, invaded the Empire, defeated *Pompey* at the Battel of *Pharsalia*, and was afterwards assassinated in the Senate? I do not think that any of them is so extravagant, as to deny these Matters of Fact which are so well known and so certain. I am also very sure, that if there should be any Sceptic so mad as to doubt of them, they would be the First that should laugh at him. I ask in the Second Place, why they are so firmly persuaded of the Truth of these Facts: They will answer, Because they are attested by many Persons worthy of Credit, and they contain nothing that is impossible. This is doubtless a very solid Reason, and sufficient to convince all Persons of good Sense. Let us therefore compare it with the Proofs we have of the History of the Gospel. The Authors who wrote it relate, That towards the End of the Reign of *Herod* the first, a Virgin in the Country of *Judea* conceiv'd by the Operation of the Holy Ghost, That she brought forth a Son who was call'd *Jesus*, who being arriv'd at the Age of about Thirty Years, began to Preach publicly, that he was the *Messias* promis'd in the Scriptures, and That he was to die for the Expiation of the Sins of all those that should believe in him, and obey his Precepts. They add, That he did an almost infinite Number of Miracles of all

all Kinds, That he was Crucified under the Government of *Pontius Pilate*, at the Solicitation of the chief Men among the *Jews*, That he Rose from the Dead on the Third Day, That he ascended into Heaven Forty Days after, and That on the Day of *Pentecost* next following, he sent down upon his Apostles the Holy Spirit, who communicated to them the Power of Speaking all Sorts of Languages, and of Working the greatest Miracles. These are the principal Facts which are to be found in the Books of the New Testament. Let us now see if they be of such a Nature as deserves Belief from reasonable Men. Now a Matter of Fact ought to be accounted certain when it has these Three Conditions. First, It must be a Thing that is possible; Secondly, It must be such as one can easily judge of without Mistaking: Lastly, It must be attested by clear, positive Testimonies, which are also as strong as can be desired. Now I will prove, That the most important Facts I have related, had these Three Conditions. And First 'tis plain, That they are all very possible to God, who according to the *Idea* we have of his infinite Perfections, can do all Things that do not imply a Contradiction. Secondly, It was easy for any Persons, even those that are most simple, to assure themselves of the Truth of almost all the Miracles of *Jesus Christ*. Thirdly, 'Tis no less manifest, that the History of them is founded upon such Proofs, as above all others are

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are most undeniable; Which are these. Those who testified these Facts were good Witnesses of them; for they heard with their own Ears, they saw, view'd and considered with their own Eyes, touch'd with their own Hands what they affirm'd. They were not only Two or Three Persons who gave this Testimony, but a great Number of People, who were so far from having any Interest to maintain obstinately what they preach'd if it had been false, That they should rather have been very careful to keep Silence, that they might avoid the Shame of being accounted Impostors, and exempt themselves from the Persecutions to which their Preaching continually expos'd them. But this is not all, for the most terrible Menaces, the most cruel Deaths, could not force them to keep Silence, or to retract their Testimony. And how contemptible soever they appear'd in the Eyes of the World, the Religion they taught, did nevertheless make every-where a wonderful Progress in the World, in spite of the Prejudices of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, in spite of the Crosses, Afflictions, and inconceivable Torments which were the certain Lot of all those who profess'd it. Let the *Infidels* make a serious Reflection upon all these Circumstances, and compare them together. They believe what I have related of *Cesar*; they are fully persuaded of the Facts recorded by the Historians, whereof some never saw any thing of what they wrote, others were not Eye-Witnesses of
the

the whole, and not one of them ever suffer'd the least Pain for maintaining the Facts they wrote, which all the World were at Liberty to publish and believe without any Danger: And yet they refuse to believe those Matters of Fact which are possible, and which are attested by an infinite Number of Persons, who protest that they heard, saw and touch'd what they relate, and against whom their greatest Enemies can object nothing but the Meanness of their Birth, their Poverty and Simplicity; Persons who seal'd their Testimony with their Blood, from whom the most horrible Deaths could not extort the least Denial, and who, notwithstanding the Persecutions which were inseparable from the Profession of *Christianity*, did not cease to make an innumerable Company of *Prose-lytes*, who joyfully renounc'd all the Pleasures of this World, and even Life it self, that they might inviolably observe the Religion they had embrac'd.

What can the *Libertines* answer to these Reasons? Is it not evident, that they are incomparably more convincing, than those which remov'd all Doubt in other Cases? Perhaps they will say, (for those who would be accounted great Wits, are very unwilling to confess a Mistake) That there are certain Things in the *Christian* Religion, which are contrary to their *Idea's*, and consequently appear to them incredible; but that there are no such Things in the Facts, that I have related

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lated concerning *Cesar*. Now let them tell
us, if they please, what these Things are,
which are so repugnant to their Reason.
Are they the Miracles which are attri-
buted to *Jesus Christ* and his Disciples?
But dare they maintain that there is
any of them which is not possible to
an Almighty Being? Are they the Do-
ctrines which the Apostles taught? But
let them examine them without Preju-
dice, and they must grant, that they are
all worthy of the Perfections of God,
and the Excellency of a Human Crea-
ture, and that if there be some which
are above the Capacity of our Under-
standing, there are none of them which
imply a Contradiction; which is sufficient
to make us receive them without Relu-
tance, since they are attested with all
the Certainty that can reasonably be de-
sir'd. Lastly, Is it the Morality of the
Gospel that offends them? But there is
nothing in the Works of the wisest and
most ancient Philosophers, which comes
near the Purity and Divinity of the Max-
ims which are taught in the New Testa-
ment. In troth these People do plainly
discover by the Immorality of their Be-
haviour, and the Weakness of their Rea-
sons, That nothing but their Lusts raise
their Doubts, and That they are the
true Cause of the bad Use they make of
their Reason upon this Occasion. If our
Religion did not condemn their Favou-
rite Inclinations; If it did not threaten
impenitent Sinners with Eternal Torments
in

in Hell: in a Word, If they could be *Christians*, without renouncing that which is dearest to them, or at least, without feeling the Stinging Remorse of Conscience; I am persuaded, that we should not see any great Number of *Infidels*. I pray them most earnestly to reflect seriously upon all the Demonstrations I have propos'd, and not to despise the Exhortation I shall now give them in a few Words, in my *Conclusion*.

The Conclusion.

AFTER all that I have said to prove the Truth of the *Christian* Religion, there remain but three Things to be done.

The First is, to exhort the *Infidels* to read this Work with all the Application of Mind, and Desire of knowing the Truth, which the Importance of the Subject requires. Let them consider well, that the Mat-

1. *An Exhortation to Infidels to enquire into the Truth of Christianity.*

ter here treated of, is not any indifferent Point of Human Science, or any Affair, whose Consequences can only be advantageous or hurtful for a little Time; but the Question is, Whether there be after this Life a Heaven and a Hell, *i. e.* a Happiness and Misery exceeding great and eternal? And can they say, That this is not an Enquiry about a Matter of the greatest Moment? which if it be; Does it not consequently deserve, that we should use our utmost endeavours to discover, whether the Belief of this Do-

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ctrine

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ctrine be well-grounded or no? But in
stead of taking the greatest Care to
know the Truth of this Matter, they
think it enough, that they can start some
Difficulties against Religion, and invent
some insipid Raillery to ridicule it; and
then they have no Mind to enquire any
further about it, and are so far from in-
forming themselves better, that they shun
all Opportunities of improving their
Knowledge as to this Affair. But, in good
Earnest, does this Way of Proceeding
become such People as value themselves
for Wisdom above all the rest of Man-
kind? Do they think, that no more is
required for passing a Definitive Sentence,
as they do, about a Doctrine of so great
Consequence, than to have some confus'd
and superficial Notions, such as they
have of it, and to be able to attack it
with some slight Objections? If they stu-
dy *Humanity* or *Mathematicks*, &c. Do
they not begin first with the Principles,
and before they are well-instructed in
them, will they or dare they pronounce,
that such or such an Article is false or
true? Why then do they not follow the
same Method, as to *Christianity*? Why
do they not examine first, with all possi-
ble Application, the Reasons upon which
it is founded? Doubtless they will bold-
ly say, that they have done so: But for
this I appeal to the Testimony of their
own Conscience, and all those who have
had any Conversation with them upon
this Subject. Let them not seek to flatter
and

and cheat themselves. Is this a Matter, wherein they may freely sport and deceive themselves, when upon it depends all that ought to be dearest to us in the World? I conjure them therefore, by their dearest Interest, to make upon this Occasion, all the Enquiry that is necessary for informing themselves well, about a Point so important. If it be undeniable, that a great Number of Persons of extraordinary Learning, of a profound Judgment, and a piercing Wit, have acknowledg'd the Certainty of *Christianity*, and yielded to the Evidence of its Proofs, after they have many Times examin'd them with all possible Exactness; Is not this a Prejudice strong enough to hinder the *Libertines* from embracing rashly a contrary Belief, before they have a perfect Knowledge of the Matter? The vast Learning of so many great Men, should at least raise some Suspicion in the Minds of *Infidels*, that they may be mistaken; and oblige them to suspend their Judgment, until they be better inform'd, and not to give Sentence so magisterially about these Matters upon slight Grounds. Before they give a Final Decision, as they do in this Case, they should, like Wise Men, examine carefully and often our Reasons: I say *carefully and often*, because when they have never well-consider'd them, they will appear so new and strange, that they can hardly perceive their whole Force at one slight Reading. But that they may be sensible of this Force, 'tis

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necessary, that they should utterly renounce those Immoralities, which their Lusts engage them to practise, those deadly Immoralities, which have rais'd and confirm'd in them, by length of Time, a Prejudice almost invincible against Religion. I know that it will be extremely difficult, for them to knock off such strong Chains; but still they must be endeavouring to do it, for the Affair is of the greatest Consequence, and if they neglect it, they have all Reason to fear that their Carelessness will throw them Head-long into the most dreadful Torments.

2. *An Exhortation to Christians, that are not well-inform'd.*

2. In the Second Place I address my self to all *Christians*, that are not sufficiently instructed in the Truths I have advanc'd: And I pray them to meditate upon them seriously, and as often as they can. The more they think of them, the more they will be convinc'd, and the stronger their Faith is, the more fruitful it will be in good Works: For it is in a Manner impossible that we should be fully persuaded of the Truth of the *Christian* Doctrine, and that we should frequently reflect upon it, but this Belief must have a powerful Influence upon all the Actions of our Life. And if thro' Weakness, we do unhappily succumb under the Power of some Temptation; yet 'tis certain, that our Faith being well-grounded, will not suffer us to continue long in the Dark-
nels

ness of Sin, but by the bitter Remorse of our own Conscience, we shall quickly be awaken'd out of our Spiritual Lethargy.

3. I conclude with Conjur-
ing lukewarm and debauch'd
Christians, not to satisfy them-
selves with a mere Historical

3. An Exhor-
tation to Chri-
stians of bad
Lives.

Faith, such as that of the Devils is; a
Faith so Fatal, that it will render them
much more inexcusable than those poor
Wretches, who have languish'd all their
Life-time in Ignorance. *The Servant that
knew his Master's Will, and did it not, shall
be beaten with many Stripes,* says Jesus Christ,
Luke 12. 47. And if we have been so
happy as to be enlighten'd with the Know-
ledge of the Truth, we must make our
*Light to shine before Men, that others seeing
our good Works, may glorify our Father which
is in Heaven,* Mat. 5. 16. Our Immora-
lities extremely afflict good Souls, they
grieve the Angels, and the Holy Spirit
himself: How comes this to pass?
Should those who commit them be the
only Persons that are not affected with
them? Let them consider, that this is one
of the greatest Reasons, that alienates
the *Libertines* from our Holy Religion:
For when these impious Wretches see,
that those who profess it, who dispute
sometimes warmly about it, and who
perform exactly enough all the external
Duties of Piety, are Malicious, Calum-
niators, Covetous, Unjust, Robbers, Unchast,

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Murderers, Blasphemers, and commit those
other Sins, which the Scripture declares
to be damnable, they pretend, that they
have just Cause to think, that the Belief
of the *Infidels* and the greatest Part of
Christians, at the Bottom is the same; and
that there is no other Difference between
them, but that the one is more sincere
and less circumspect than the other. In
the Name of God let us wipe off this
fatal Scandal by a true Conversion: Let
our Behaviour be agreeable to our Prin-
ciples. If we believe the Promises of the
Gospel, and desire to be made Partakers
of them, *Let us cleanse our selves from all*
Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit; For no-
thing is more certain, than that no
unclean Thing shall ever enter into the
Heavenly *Jerusalem*. I heartily pray to
God, that he would bless my weak En-
deavours, and inspire all Mankind, with
an earnest Desire of knowing his Will,
and obeying his Commands.

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